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MARCH 2007

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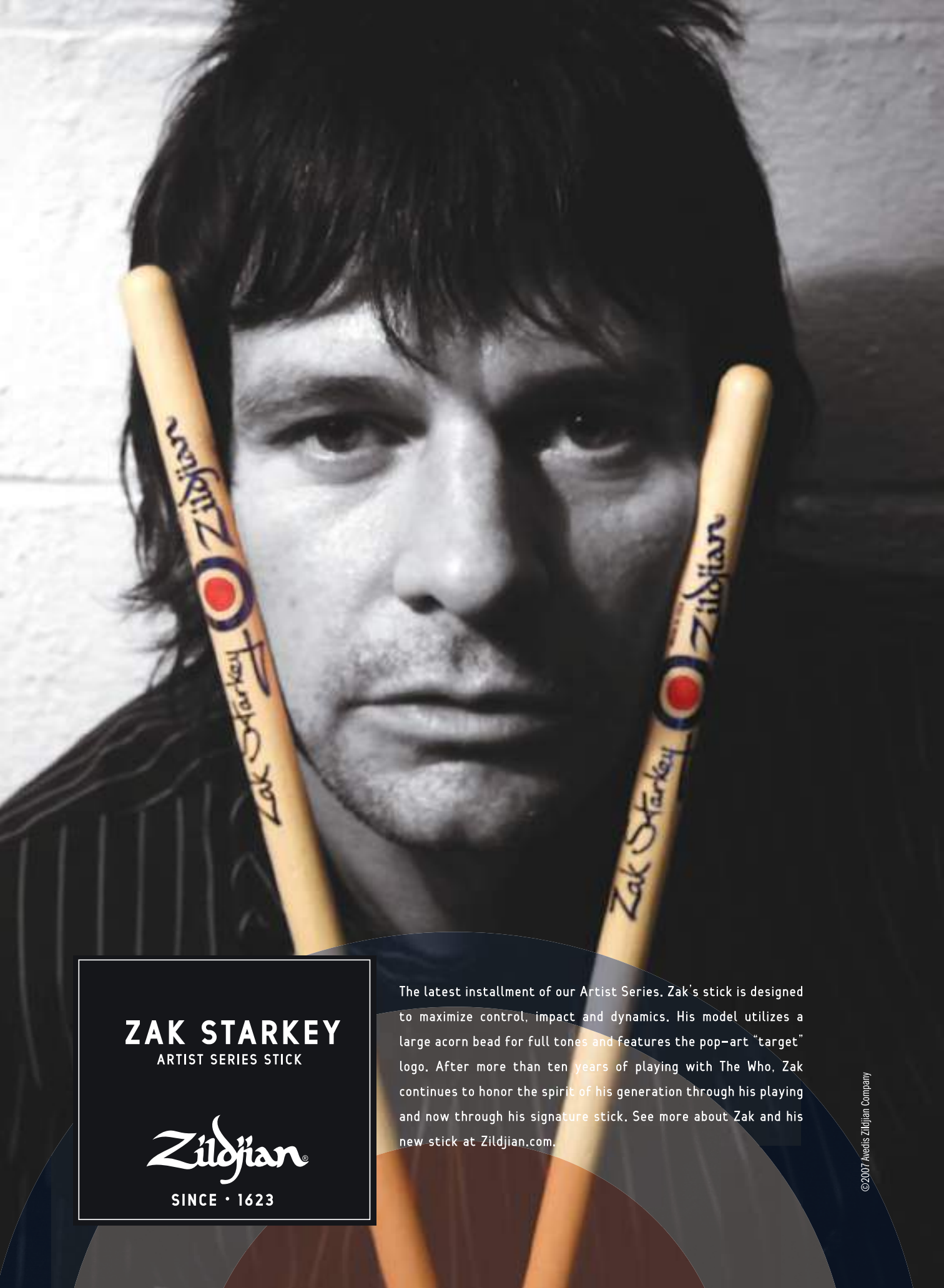

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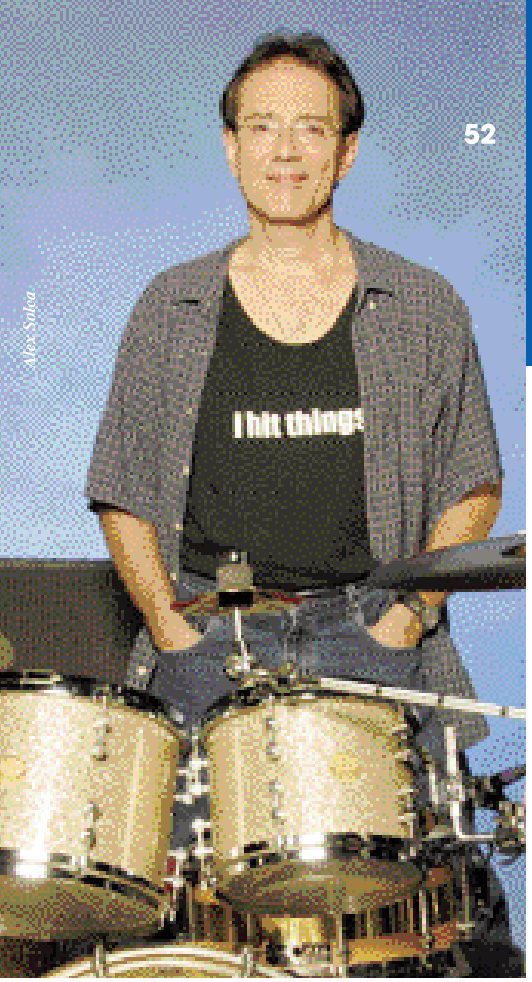

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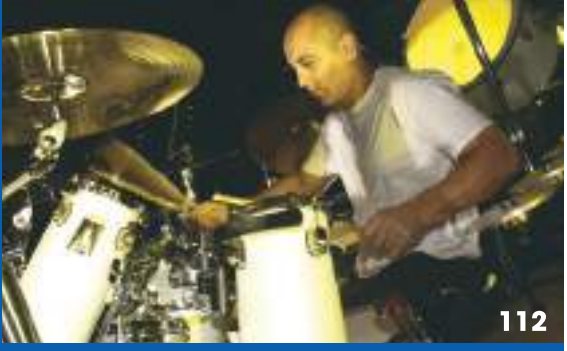

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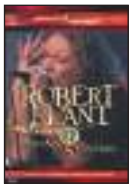

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ROCKER
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Ronnie Vannucci
The Killers

DARKER
Zildjian
SINCE • 1623
Cindy Blackman
Santana

Great drummers have known for years that the warmer voices of the K Zildjian Series can rock as hard as any other. Now, the all-new K Light line gives them more options. In fact, drummers like Ronnie, Joey, Brooks and Travis have already made the new 24" K Light Ride an indispensable part of their sound. This monster generates wide variations of sound and its thin weight provides a dark pitch with plenty of overtones. Lower in pitch than our traditional K HiHats, the new 13" & 14" K Light HiHats feature a medium thin top for a broad range of tonal colors, paired with a medium bottom to ensure a solid "chick". Light, but ready to rock.

Developed in conjunction with Cindy, the new 22" K Zildjian Dark Medium Ride is designed to perform in rock and jazz settings with equal effectiveness. This cymbal features a large bell for excellent projection in rock settings, and special hammering and lathing to open up the cymbal for broad tonal complexities in jazz settings. Exclusive "Pin" lathing enhances the crashability and gives the cymbal an appearance reminiscent of 1960's era K Zildjians.

Paperback Writer

Happy New Year, everyone. Is it just me, or does time seem to be moving faster and faster? John Lennon summed it up perfectly for me in his advice to his young son Sean, in the lyrics to the song "Beautiful Boy." "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." And *that* was twenty-six years ago.

I remember the fist time I became aware of this month's cover artist, Vinnie Colaiuta. My God, dare I say, it was 1981, and he was playing drums on the Gino Vanneli record *Nightwalker*. Since then Vinnie's transformed himself into a bona fide drum legend. We at *Modern Drummer* are very proud and honored to feature him once again on our cover—along with all the other wonderful artists in this month's issue.

That brings me to another thought that blows my mind: I've been reading *Modern Drummer* for thirty years, and even though I've been working here for quite some time now, I have to admit, I'm *still* learning new ideas and facts about my favorite drummers and the bands they play with. As much as I love the Internet, I still enjoy reading publications, *especially* magazines.

I've been a fan of music magazines for as long as I can remember. The first ones I read as a kid were *Circus* and *Hit Parader*. Then I added *Rolling Stone*, *Creem*, *Crawdaddy*, and *Musician* to the mix. Today I still enjoy reading and learning from all the different music magazines out there—and there's quite a few (maybe more than we actually *need*, though perhaps that's a topic for another editorial). Among the magazines I read every month are *Rolling Stone*, *Guitar Player*, *Bass Player*, *Keyboard*, *EQ*, *Mojo*, and *Blender*.

You'll notice I mentioned a couple of non-drumming music magazines. Just because your main instrument is drums, that shouldn't limit you to *only* reading about them. Read it all! There are many more titles than the ones I've mentioned here, but these and others can offer valuable tips, educational pieces, and even fun facts that will help you become the best musician you can be.

Read, learn, have fun, and *always* play to achieve the brilliance toward which you aspire.

I hope you enjoy this issue and the new year.

MODERN DRUMMER®

Volume 31 Number 3

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A Satisfied Customer

I received the December issue today, and I was surprised and pleased at what I saw. I'm fifty-six years old, and I tend to prefer coverage of jazz, funk, fusion, big band, and '60s/'70s rock 'n' roll drummers. But I appreciate the great balancing act you do, such as working Jack DeJohnette and Jeff Hamilton into the same issue in which Stephen Perkins appears as the cover artist. Thank you for that!

The feature on drum thrones was great, too. I like the *MD* editors giving their personal choices. It's one thing to read a product review, but it's additionally helpful to hear what working drummers actually use themselves. And your new *Snare Drum Of The Month* department is a terrific addition.

It's obvious that *MD* is constantly striving to make every issue better. Keep doing it! **Glenn Meyers**

Mark Guiliana

Your December feature on Mark Guiliana was great. I had the opportunity to see Mark with the Jazz Mandolin Project a couple of years ago. I've never seen such a great performance from a drummer. This guy is really pushing the envelope with his music. Plus, after the set, Mark was more than willing to shake hands and give some drum tips. Very nice! **Matthew Sherman**

Thanks From Danny

My experience at the Modern Drummer Festival was better than I could have ever imagined. I want to thank everyone at *Modern Drummer*, Hudson Music, and most importantly the fans for giving me a memory that I will never forget. If I died tomorrow it would be with a smile on my face.

My only regret is that I didn't play better. To be honest, I was pretty nervous. But nonetheless there were some wonderful band moments in our set, and it was filmed magnificently by *MD* and Hudson.

I'm overwhelmed with emotion by the support, love, and respect I've been receiving from fans, friends, and the drumming community. I never realized the impact I had on so many drummers. I'm truly looking forward to the challenge of expanding the horizons of my drumming to places it's never been. I know now how many people are pulling for me, so I can't and won't let them down. **Danny Seraphine**

Correction From Ed

I'd like to correct a minor error that appeared in the December *Quick Beats* featurette. Since I played on five Count Basie albums, as well as on the *Charlie Parker & Friends* CD, Charlie and Count Basie would not be musicians "I'd like to have worked with." My answer more accurately refers to musicians I wish I could play with again. **Ed Shaughnessy**

Sharing The Wealth

Rick Van Horn's December editorial, "Share The Wealth," touched me personally. Like Rick, I've been a drummer for over forty years, during which time I collected many drums, cymbals, and percussion pieces. On August 29, 2005, hurricane Katrina hit my home town of Waveland, Mississippi. My house suffered substantial damage, and I lost all my drums and percussion equipment.

This taught me a valuable lesson. Had I passed my extra gear to someone who could use it, maybe it would still be around making music. By my hoarding it, it wound up doing no one any good. So I say to all the drummers out there: Share your extra stuff. Making someone smile is the greatest gift of all. **Jerry L'Enfant**

High On The Wire

Let me tell you how much I enjoy the *MD Wire* online newsletter. It simultaneously whets and sates my appetite for the upcoming issue. But after reading twenty-plus years of *MD*, I should expect nothing but the latest and greatest from you guys. **James Buckley**

Editor's note: Interested in receiving MD Wire? *Go to moderndrummer.com and register today.*

Dropped Beat

The December *New And Notable* item pertaining to the Peace Legion Celebrity kit contained two errors. The bass drum is a 16x20, not a 14x20. And the correct Web address is www.percedrum.com.

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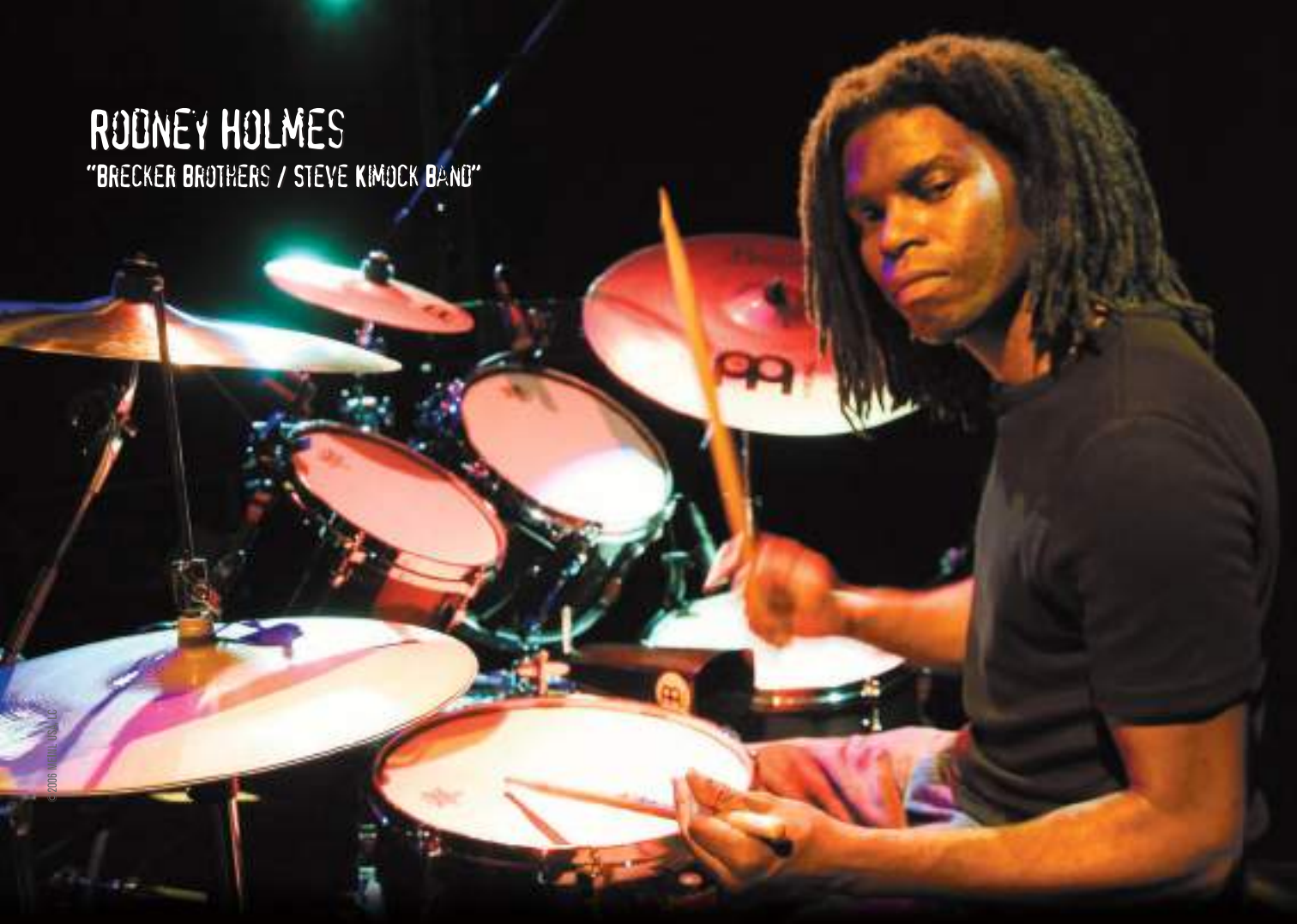

Thomas Lang

Brann Dailor - "Mastodon"

Trey Gray - "Brooks and Dunn"

Trevor Lawrence Jr.
"Stevie Wonder/Snoop Dogg"

Chris Adler - "Lamb of God"

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Pearl MLX Drum Sound

About five years ago I played at a festival where drummers played on the host band's kit. That kit was a set of 1980s-era Pearl MLX drums, with tom sizes (I think) of 10x10, 12x12, and 14x14. I'm not sure if they were maple or birch. The insides of the shells appeared to have a poly coating of some sort, and the heads were Remo Pinstripes. Those toms had the most gorgeous sound: a high-pitched attack with a very deep shell sound that was resonant yet focused. Can you describe how the drums were made? I've been trying to replicate their sound on my own high-end drums ever since, without success. **Greg Peller**

1990 MLX Prestige Custom kit with long high-tension lugs

1984 Pearl MLX-8500 kit with separate lugs

Pearl product manager Gene Okamoto replies, "The MLX (lacquered) and MX (covered) series were introduced in 1984. Both featured 6-ply, 7.5 mm–thick 100% maple shells, and they're considered by many drummers to be some of the finest-sounding Pearl drums ever.

"The original MLX/MX drums featured separate lugs (designated C-052). In 1987 the lugs were switched to high-tension long models (the HL series) and the MLX series was designated as Prestige Custom. The photos show the two types of lugs.

"The high-gloss interior coating was in keeping with the trend at the time to coat or line the interiors of shells with a reflective surface to increase projection, and also to promote attack. The deep shell sizes contributed the depth and tonality that you refer to. The MX line was discontinued in 1993, and the MLX was discontinued in 1996."

Zildjian Prototype Ride

I'm a semi-pro drummer from the Netherlands. I recently took a chance and purchased the 22" Zildjian ride cymbal shown in the accompanying photo. It appeared to be brand new, but it wasn't from any series that I could identify. It has a brilliant finish and the stamped designation "Sound Lab Prototype." The engraved logo information indicates "K Zildjian & Co., Made In USA," and there's a serial number of jf 064337. I hope you can tell me more about this cymbal. **Wessel Kuit**

Our answer comes from Zildjian product communications and training manager John King, who states, "Over the years, Zildjian has released various cymbal prototypes—in limited quantities—in order to establish if they have viability within the global marketplace. Our new K Custom Hybrid series was test-marketed in this way, only within the Japanese market. After the results proved to be positive, the line was officially introduced in January of 2006.

"You now possess a 22" K crash-ride prototype cymbal that was originally designed for Zak Starkey, the powerhouse drummer for The Who. Zak's use of these cymbals (also available to him in a 21" size) over the past couple of years has created interest with other European drummers, so Zildjian decided to make a few of these instruments available in strategic European locations. It remains to be seen as to whether or not these cymbals will become a permanent part of the Zildjian catalog. But we certainly hope the cymbal will become an important part of your setup."

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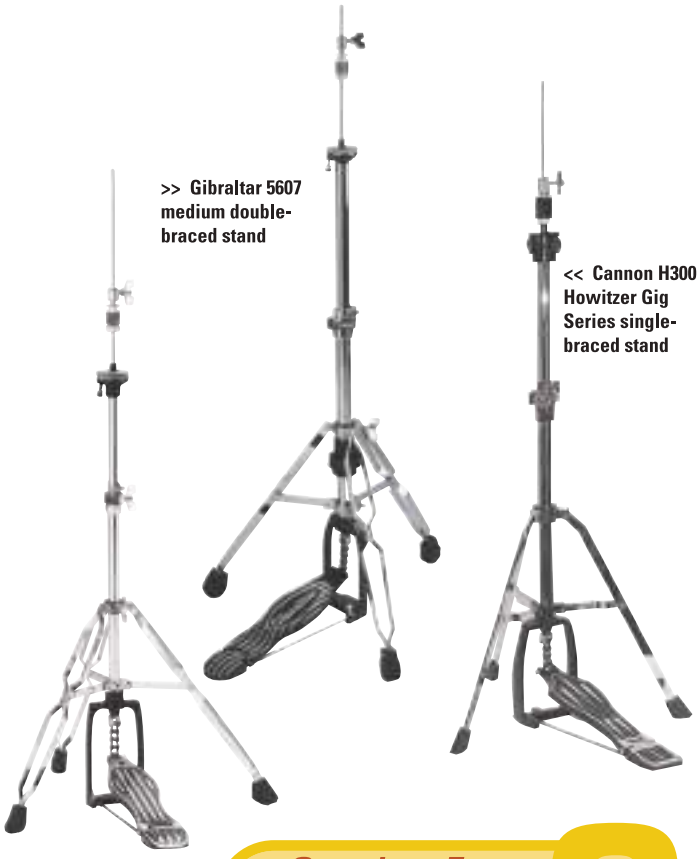
Hi-Hat Problem

I play drums in jazz band at my school. We have an old Pearl hi-hat stand fitted with 14" Sabian B8 Pro hi-hat cymbals. The stand wobbles and is kind of rusty, but I don't know if that has to do with the problem I'm having. That problem is that the hi-hat will play fine for a little while, and then the top cymbal won't come up. Something seems to be sticking. Anything you could tell me would be helpful. Keyven Dunn

It sounds as if the pull rod (the shaft that moves up and down when the pedal is operated, and that the top hi-hat cymbal attaches to) has gotten bent. When this happens, it can bind against another part of the hi-hat's internal structure, preventing the rod from moving up and down smoothly. It's also possible that there is a problem with the spring linkage between the rod and the pedal.

Most hi-hat pull rods are actually two pieces: the upper section that you can detach along with the top half of the stand, and the lower section that's part of the pedal-and-tripod assembly. If the upper section is bent, straightening it out would not be too difficult. If the lower section is the culprit, trying to remove and straighten it would be a more complex mechanical operation. Trying to get to the spring linkage would be equally difficult.

Since you say that the hi-hat stand wobbles and is rusty, we respectfully suggest that it might be time for a new stand. This need not be an expensive proposition. Check out inexpensive models from Gibraltar, Cannon, and Dixon, along with many affordable models from the major drum brands.



>> Gibraltar 5607 medium double-braced stand

<< Cannon H300 Howitzer Gig Series single-braced stand

Dixon 707 light double-braced stand

Questions For MD's Drum Experts?

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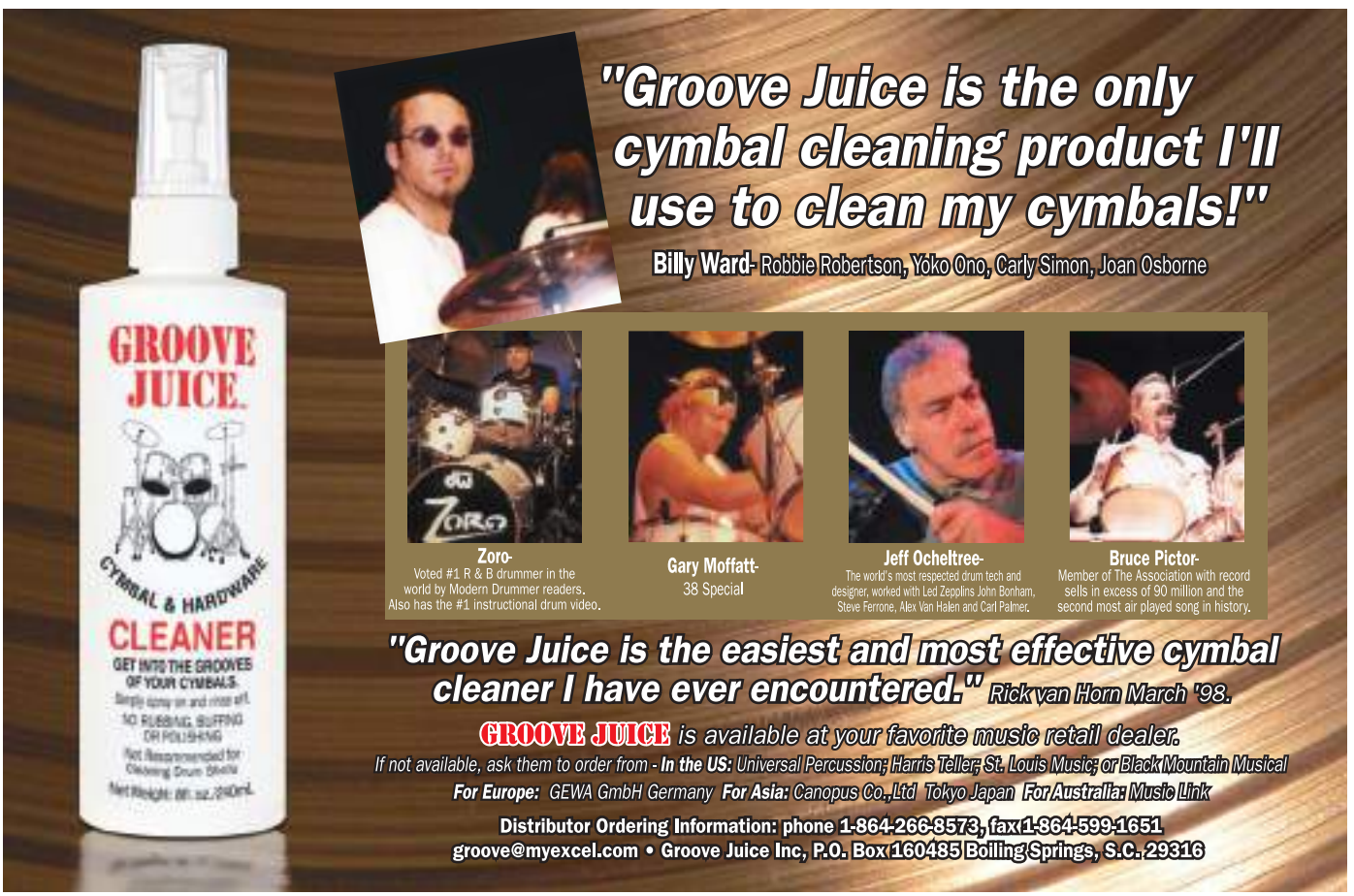

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Q I love your drumming, and I'd particularly like to get some information about your bass drum technique. How do you play so fast and accurately with one foot? Any exercises or suggestions you could provide would be great. Keep up the great inspiration you provide for all drummers. **Mitchell MacDonald**

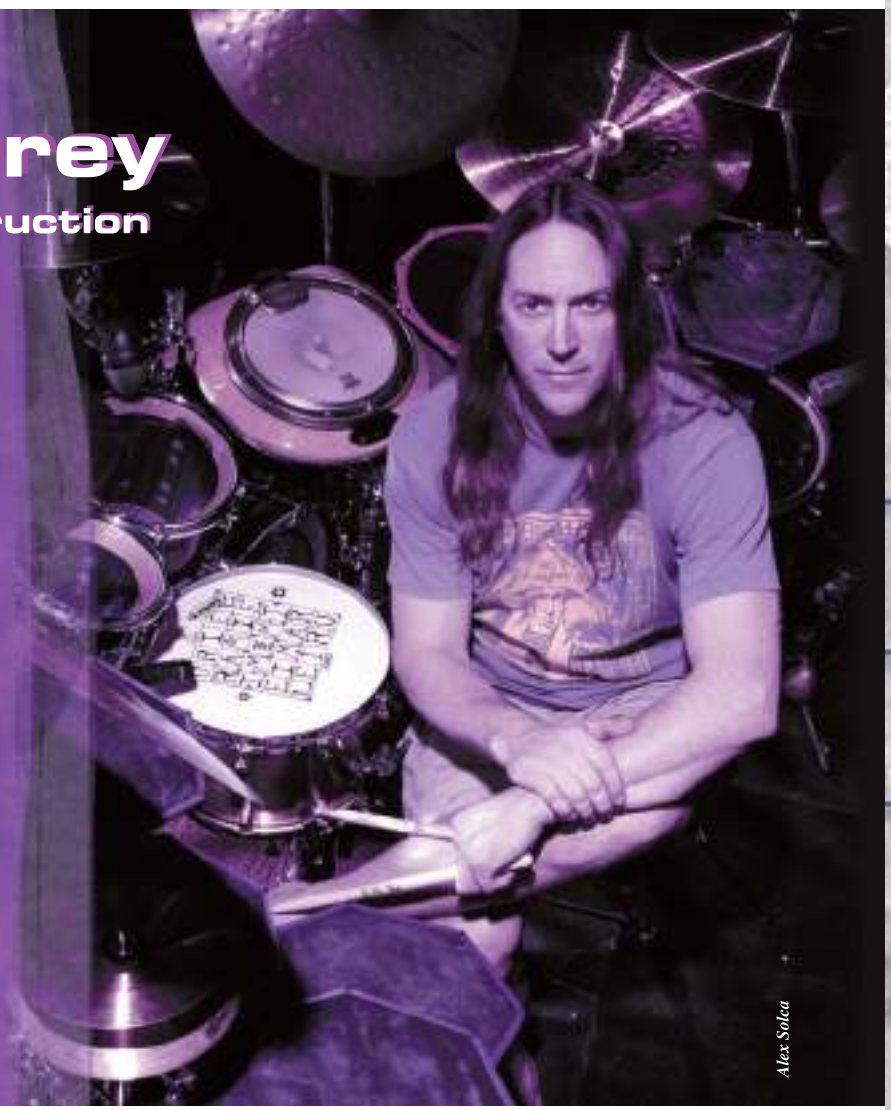
A Thanks for the kind words. I've had many adventures trying to get my right foot as fast as two feet. Here's what worked for me. Make the spring tension on your pedal as tight as you can. If necessary, buy a heavy-duty spring. You'll know you're on the right track when the pedal is *very* hard to press down, even for a single beat. Once you've got the tension spring that tight, practice, practice, practice. Over time, the resistance on the pedal will strengthen your foot, ankle, and leg muscles. It's like lifting weights to develop arm strength.

When you play a gig, you can release some of the tension on the spring to make the pedal playable. But eventually you'll become comfortable keeping your pedal at the tightest tension. That way, it can operate at the fastest speed possible.

God bless you on your one-foot adventure.

Danny Carey

On Drumshell Construction



Alex Solca

Q I have a question about your kit. Are the reinforcement hoops on your toms (shown in the picture on the July '06 *MD* cover) custom, or is that stock for the new Sonor drums? I totally believe in reinforcement hoops, but I'd like to get your take on them. **Todd**

A The Sonor drums I'm playing now are custom-made to my specifications. There are no reinforcement hoops. The shells are graduated in thickness in relation to their diameter, getting thinner as the size gets larger to help promote low-end resonance and pronounced fundamental frequency. The extra-thick shells on the small toms (which may have appeared to be reinforcing hoops on that cover photo) increase the ability for them to cut through loud amplified music and maintain the character of the ebony and beechwood they're made from.

Thanks for your interest, and happy drumming!

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LOUIE BELLSON

(Big Band Great)

Text and photo by Joe Perry

Place of birth: Rock Falls, Illinois
Influences: Peter Erskine, Dennis Chambers, all drummers
Hobbies/interests: Baseball, basketball
Favorite food: Pasta, vegetables, fruit, seafood
Favorite junk food: Pizza
Favorite drink: Cranberry juice, wine
Favorite TV shows: *The Cosby Show, Seinfeld, Milton Berle, Jack Benny*
Favorite movie: *The African Queen*
Favorite album: Count Basie and Duke Ellington albums
How I relax: Meditation
Other instruments I play: Piano
If I wasn't a drummer, I'd be: An artist/painter
Place I'd like to visit: China
Person I admire: All bandleaders
Musician I'd like to work with: Earth Wind & Fire, Chicago, The Count Basie Band
Next up-and-coming drummers: Hannah Ford, Darien Williams
People I'd like to have a conversation with: Count Basie and Duke Ellington
Most memorable performance: With Duke Ellington at Grace Cathedral, in 1965

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Dave Padilla and Jimmy Bowman

Papa Roach's Dave Buckner
Paramour Drumming

When the members of Papa Roach chose to live for several months in LA's historic Paramour Mansion while recording their band's fifth album, drummer Dave Buckner got a bit more creative inspiration than he expected. "The Paramour is definitely haunted," Buckner explains. "Being a spiritually open person, I had quite a few metaphysical, paranormal experiences on that property. I don't know if that *specifically* had any affect on my drumming on this record. But the physical aspects of the house itself and the rooms in which we recorded affected my writing *and* playing."

The majority of recording for *The Paramour Sessions* took place in the mansion's acoustically favorable grand ballroom. "Every note you hit in that room just lingers on forever," says Dave. "One kick drum hit or snare crack will sustain for a whole bar. Because of that, we all started playing a bit more simply and sometimes a little slower. We really tried to focus on the small spaces in the music and the placements of each part.

"I'm a pretty straightforward drummer anyway," Buckner continues. "But I really just got down to four-on-the-floor, bare bones playing—like Phil Rudd, almost. That's where I felt I needed to be. I'm not the kind of drummer who takes a measure of music and subdivides every beat to see how many different ways I can split up the time. My goal with my drumming is to help convey the emotion of the music and to, literally, speak emotionally with my drums. That's the only way I ever think about the way I play."

Inspired primarily by "rock band" drummers, Dave's influences include John Bonham, Faith No More's Mike Bordin, Abe Cunningham from The Deftones, and, surprisingly, William Goldsmith, best known for his tenure with Sunny Day Real Estate. Dave offers, "From listening to William's playing, especially on Sunny Day's live album, I learned so much about displacement and how to put the beat in weird places but make it sound like it's *supposed* to be there. His whole feel and the way he occupies the space of the music is amazing." **Gail Worley**

Muse's Dominic Howard
Supermassive Sounds

After touring for most of 2004 and 2005 in support of their breakthrough release, *Absolution*, southpaw drummer Dominic Howard and his bandmates in British rockers Muse spent six months sequestered in a studio in southern France, putting together *Black Holes And Revelations*. It's the group's most dynamic and diverse record to date.

This time around, the band dove into new musical territory, including experimenting with various electronic instruments. Says Dom, "We had a lot of synths, drum machines, and vintage gear in the studio, so a lot of the tracks were born out of messing around with those instruments."

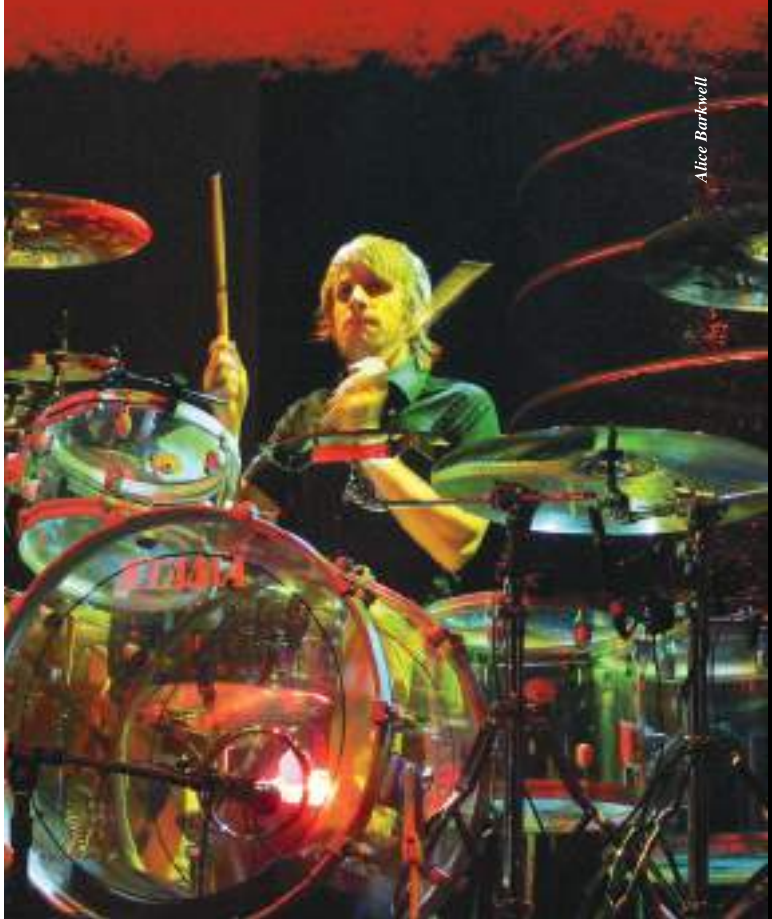
For his parts, the drummer approached each track individually. "The process in the studio is trial and error," Dom admits. "It was never: Let's set up a drumkit, get sounds, and record twelve tracks. It was a lot of messing around, changing mics and drums, and the moving kits to different parts of the room."

For some of the songs, the drum parts weren't finalized until the band flew to New York for additional tracking. "It was hard to finish until we got to New York," Dom recalls. "That's when the beats on tunes like 'Starlight' changed. That song went through loads of different grooves, but it wasn't until the glam vibe turned up that it made sense."

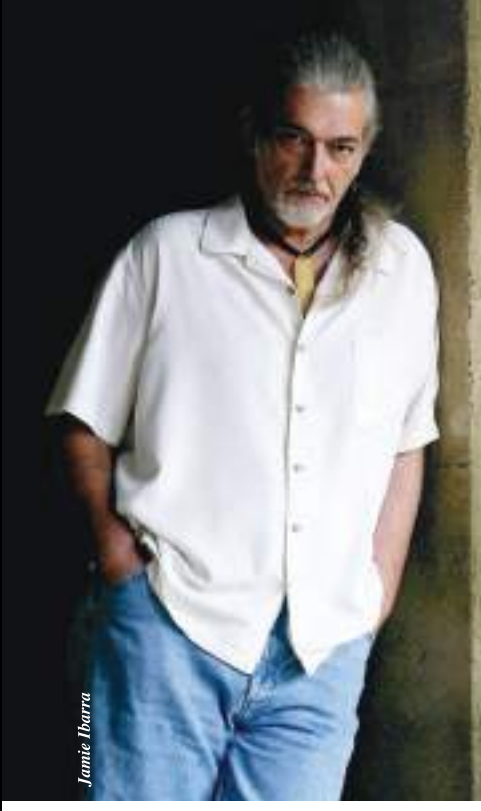
When asked about the programmed drum sound at the start of "Starlight," Dom explains, "The kit at the start is muted down, but it's still live. We're also clapping along, which gives the impression that it's sampled."

On stage, the drummer has expanded his five-piece acrylic Tama kit with a Roland SPD sampler in order to reproduce "Supermassive Black Hole," the album's most electronic-sounding song. "I'm running triggers for that one," says Dom. "I've sampled the sounds from the record, and I mix them with the live kit."

Dom also controls many of the MIDI sequences that supplement Muse's live show, requiring him to lock in with a click track. "I never used to be able to play with a click," he admits. "But it's easy to lose your mind on stage, and the click makes you focus on keeping it cool." **Michael Dawson**



Alice Barkwell



Jamie Ibarra

Jim Brock

On The Nature Of Drumming

Jim Brock's new CD/DVD set, *The Nature Of Drumming*, is an inspirational look at what makes this fine drummer/percussionist tick. "It's basically an instructional video for why we play, and not so much on *how* we play," Brock explains. "That's why it deals with world music. The Cuban, Native American, and Brazilian pieces are all spiritual chants. The jazz pieces are representative of love and beauty. '79 Seagulls' is a piece that I created to show understanding to the art of listening and to paying attention to the world around us. The whole body of work is a celebration of life through music and rhythm, and how we're all a part of it. That's why I created the sound of the heartbeat. It's in us all."

Brock boasts an impressive list of credits across rock, pop, jazz, country, blues, R&B, folk, new age, and inspirational lines. And he's released three albums of his own, *Tropic Affair* (1989), *Letters From The Equator* (1993), and *Pasajes* (2002). Brock recalls first being influenced by the sounds of nature, at around the age of seven or eight. "I remember trying to imitate the different birds that were in the area where I grew up. My grandfather was a farmer, and he showed me how to whittle birdcalls out of the corn stalks that he planted in the fields."

It's rare to find a player so highly skilled on drumkit *and* hand drums. *The Nature Of Drumming* illustrates this by featuring Brock in several different ensembles. "It all goes hand in hand for me," Brock explains. "It has always amazed me that there are some drummers who don't care to ever explore, for instance, the tambourine, or percussionists who never utilize their feet. It's not necessarily important that you master these other instruments, but you should have an understanding of them. You can't have that understanding until you feel them, have your hands on them, and explore them."

For more on Jim Brock, check out his Web site, www.jimbrock.net.

Robin Tolleson

Steve Asheim

Deicide's Metal Maven

www.earache.com/media

Death metal scene-leaders Deicide have been playing their intense music for seventeen years, first attracting major exposure with their self-titled debut album in 1990. The band's latest release, *The Stench Of Redemption*, has returned them to critical prominence, and drummer Steve Asheim was in jubilant form when *Modern Drummer* spoke to him recently.

First off, he's excited about his current drum setup. According to Steve, "I use a Yamaha Tour Custom kit with a $6\frac{1}{2}$x14 brass snare, three mounted toms—10", 12", and 13"—one 16" floor tom, and two 22" kicks. I'm now using Sabian cymbals, including a 22" Heavy Bell ride, 14" hi-hats, two 17" crashes, three 16" crashes, and four Chinese cymbals—a heavy 20", an 18", a thinner 20", and a 16"."

Many death metal drummers employ triggers for a consistent live sound—but not Steve. "I use ddrum triggers on the kicks," he admits, "but not on the other drums—otherwise you just sound unnatural, like a machine." This particularly applies to Steve's trademark super-fast blast beats. As he says, "For the blast beats, timing is all important. Practice slowly and build up to full speed so you can insert fills and rolls. Keep your lower extremities loose, too. Kick back, breathe properly, and let the sticks do the work."

Steve feels he learned from the best. "I was always a metal head," he laughs. "My influences back then were Clive Burr with Iron Maiden and Tommy Aldridge, who did amazing things with Ozzy Osbourne. And then when music started getting a little more extreme, I enjoyed Dan Beehler of Exciter, Gene Hoglan of Dark Angel, and, of course, Dave Lombardo of Slayer."

It's interesting to note that, like those drumming luminaries, Steve has no qualms about playing this extreme style of drumming when he reaches senior-citizen age: "If anything, moving your limbs as a drummer keeps them *lubricated*. Look at Buddy Rich: He was whaling the hell out of his drums until he was an old man. Although it wasn't metal music, he was doing blasts on the snare—he was a blast-master!"

Joel McIver

From Stevie Wonder To The Platters
Raymond Pounds

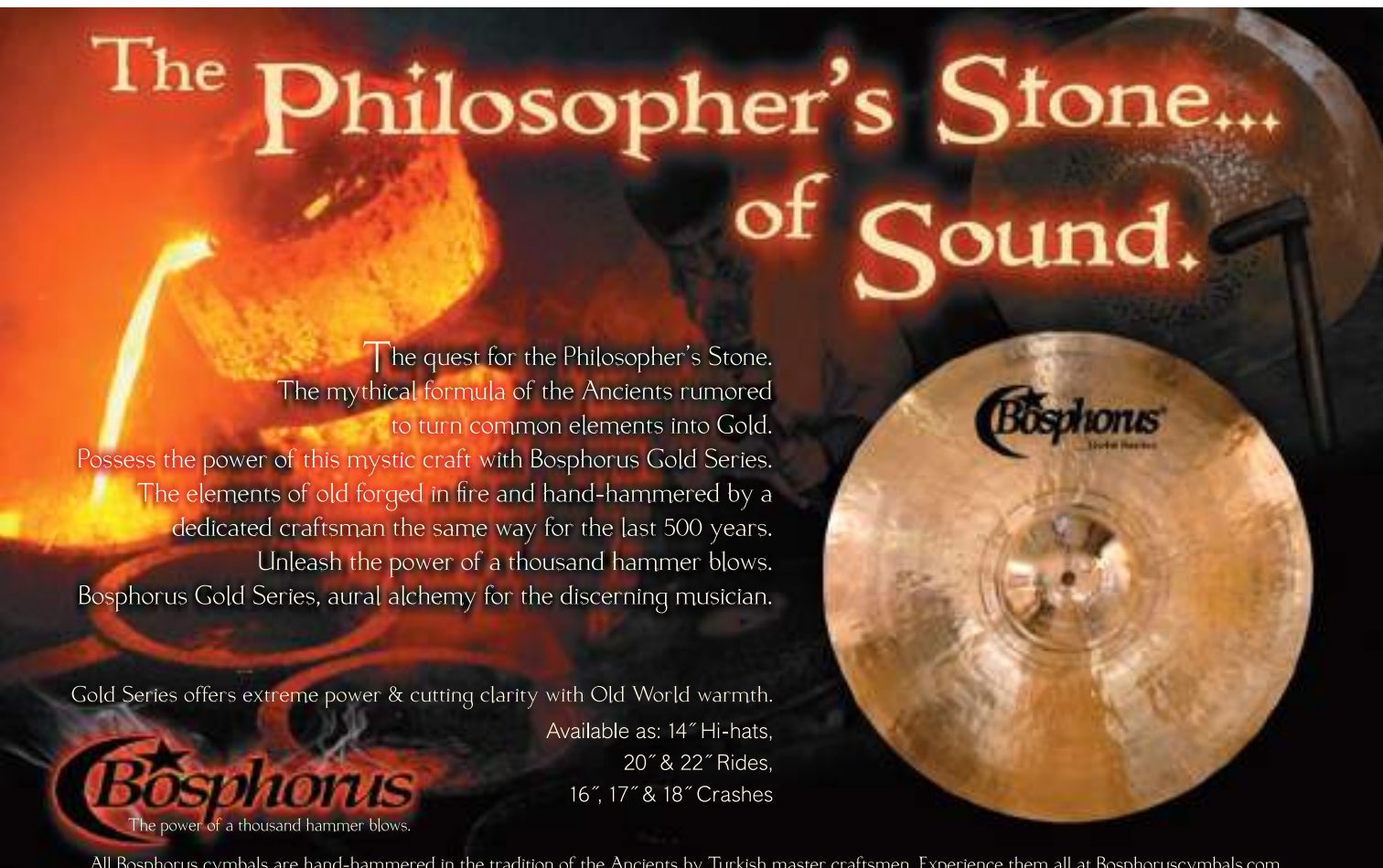
Raymond Pounds' four-decade-long drumming career took off when, at the age of twenty-two, he recorded Stevie Wonder's mega-hits "Sir Duke" and "I Wish." The drummer then went on tour with Wonder for five years.

Pounds got the Wonder gig after the R&B superstar called him to his Hollywood Hill's home to audition, based on recommendations from South African trumpet player Hugh Masakela and Jazz Crusaders drummer Stix Hooper. Pounds rang the bell, Wonder walked over to the gate, found the right key, and unlocked it as if he could see. Wonder welcomed him with, "If you don't play good, we're going to kick your ass." Well, Pounds nailed Wonder's hits, "Superstition" and "Sunshine Of My Life," and was offered the gig. The two men went on to establish a close friendship. In fact, Stevie was the best man at Pounds' wedding.

As a youngster, Pounds was a serious student of the drums. At thirteen, bass player Richard Taylor took the fledgling drummer to Clarence Johnston for lessons, which he took for nine years. Pounds' first road gig was with famed jazz singer Joe Williams, when he was only eighteen. He then performed with The Don Ellis Jazz Orchestra, known for its incredibly challenging odd-meter charts. After Pounds' time with Wonder, the drummer worked with James Brown, Bob Dylan, Chaka Kahn, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, Diana Ross, The Pointer Sisters, The Temptations, Michael Jackson, Dionne Warwick, Ice Cube, and Sean "Puffy" Combs.

Today Pounds lives comfortably with his family in his San Fernando Valley, California home, and he has a full schedule of freelance gigs, including work with The Platters, The Santa Monica College Orchestra, and The Agape Christian Fellowship Church. He also does a bit of teaching. His advice to young drummers is, "You need to learn your craft; you need to learn how to read music. If you play by ear, and you don't read, you're limited. You want to be qualified to do any desired job that comes along."

Other secrets of Pounds' success include being friendly and approachable, and being able to play everything from jazz to hip-hop. Catch up with the drummer at www.RaymondPounds.com. **Laura Phillips**



NEWS

Matt Chamberlain is on Sean Lennon's latest CD, *Friendly Fire*.

Congratulations to **Peter Criss, Corky Laing**, and **Carmine Appice** on being inducted into the Long Island Music Hall Of Fame.

Cradle Of Filth have announced that **Martin Skaroupka** is the new drummer for the band. Former drummer **Adrian Erlandsson** is leaving the band to concentrate on his two side projects, Needleye and Nemhain, the latter fronted by his wife.

Johnny Kelly is on Type O Negative's upcoming release, *Dead Again*.

Check out **Nick Mason** (Mad Yellow Sun, Voodoo Dollies) on ABC's new music show, *Official Heat*. The show offers the latest in entertainment news, reviews, concert footage, and behind-the-scenes exclusives. For more on Nick, visit his Web site, www.nickmason.org.

Brian Gogdin is touring with *American Idol*'s Taylor Hicks. **Curt Bisquera** recently recorded Hicks' new album.

Ringo Garza is out on the road with Los Lonely Boys, promoting their latest CD, *Sacred*.

Adam Nussbaum is perfect on the latest trio disc featuring the veteran jazz drummer alongside Steve Swallow and Dave Liebman. Nussbaum's flavorful brush- and stick-work are particularly tasteful in this non-chordal environment.

Scott Kusmierk is working with The Gin Blossoms supporting their new album *Major Lodge Victory*.

Jeff Campitelli is on Joe Satriani's live double CD and DVD, *Satriani Live!*

Pat McInerney is on Nanci Griffith's latest collection, *Ruby's Torch*.

Dave Weckl and **Luis Conte** are on *Viva Carlos!*, a tribute to guitar great Carlos Santana.

Frankie Banali is on Quiet Riot's new studio album, *Rehab*.

Japanese drummer **Munetaka Higuchi** has just released a live CD compilation of drum solos he has performed in concert over the years.

Chad Gracey is on tour with Live to promote their new album, *Song From Black Mountain*.

Drummer **Ari Hoenig** has recently signed a record deal with Dreyfus. His first release on the new label is due out shortly. Hoenig has been busy touring and recording with his two jazz trios, and will be touring and/or recording in the bands of Bojan Z, Jean Michael Pilc, Kenny Werner, and Seamus Blake and David Kikoski. For more information, visit www.arihoenig.com.

Johnny Dee is touring and recording with German heavy metal artist Doro. He can be heard on her new CD, *Warrior Soul*.

Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez joined guitarist Kazumi Watanabe on his third power-trio release, with bassist Richard Bona.

Todd Sucherman is featured on a new Styx live DVD, *One With Everything*. He also just completed tracks for the upcoming Taylor Mills record, as well as two songs on Jim Garrison's upcoming release.

Congrats to Alice and **Dave McAfee** (Toby Keith) on the birth of their daughter, Sandra Jeanne.

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Mike Gibbons of Badfinger was born on 3/12/49, **Karen Carpenter** on 3/2/50.

On 3/9/58, Alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley records *Somethin' Else*, with trumpeter Miles Davis, pianist Hank Jones, and the great **Art Blakey**.

On 3/25/76, Talking Heads (with **Chris Frantz**) begin a three-night headlining act at New York City's CBGBs.

On 3/22/79, Drum Workshop introduces **DW** drums.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Roy Haynes
(jazz legend): 3/13/25

D.J. Fontana
(Elvis Presley): 3/15/31

Paul Motian
(jazz great): 3/25/31

Graeme Edge
(The Moody Blues): 3/30/42

Ralph MacDonald
(percussion great): 3/15/44

Micky Dolenz
(The Monkees): 3/8/45

Harold Brown
(War): 3/17/46

John Hartman
(The Doobie Brothers): 3/18/50

Carl Palmer
(ELP, Asia): 3/20/50

James "Diamond" Williams
(Ohio Players): 3/27/50

Kenny Aronoff
(session great): 3/7/53

Matt Frenette
(Loverboy): 3/7/54

Tony Brock
(The Babys): 3/31/54

Slim Jim Phantom
(Stray Cats): 3/20/61

Rob Affuso
(Skid Row): 3/1/63

Dave Krusen
(Pearl Jam): 3/10/66

Michael Bland
(Prince, Soul Asylum): 3/14/69

Brendan Hill
(Blues Traveler): 3/27/70

Caroline Corr
(The Corrs): 3/17/73

To hear some of the artists mentioned in this month's *Update*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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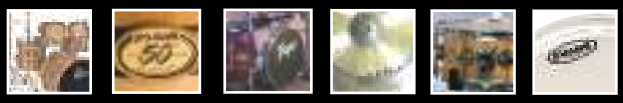


Gretsch New Classic Series

The Name Says It All

by Michael Dawson

KEY NOTES

- Tube lugs and suspension mounts minimize shell contact
- Die-cast hoops add extra weight
- 30° bearing edges
- Evans heads

The New Classic Series may be the first completely original line of drumsets for Gretsch in over fifty years, but it's not *all* new. In fact, many of the features in this series stem from time-honored Gretsch drum-making traditions, plus a few modern upgrades. (For the Gretsch purist, it's important to note that these drums are not made in the company's US factory. They're built in Taiwan.)

The kit that we were sent for review consisted of a shell-pack (18x22 kick, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms) and two snare drums ($5^1/_2$x14

The New Meets The Old

All New Classic rack toms feature Gretsch's Integrated Suspension System and Gladstone-style tube lugs.

and 6½x14), but the company offers additional sizes for a more custom setup. The series comes in two finishes: Deep Cherry Gloss and Vintage Glass Nitron. Our review kit featured the latter.

What's New?

The most obvious new components of this series are found in the hardware. The rack toms feature Gretsch's "Integrated Suspension System," which mounts between four of the drum's tube lug posts. This design is said to increase resonance without adding stress to the shell or affecting tuning. I'm not super particular about my tom mounts. I just need something that's stable, easy to adjust, and unobtrusive on the eyes. With those criteria in mind, this design worked great; the drums didn't bounce around as I played, the large thumbscrews made them easy to secure, and there's not a lot of extra metal protruding from the shell.

The snare drum throw-off and butt plate are also new. The strainer engages from the side, via a plastic-handled lever, and snare tension can be adjusted from each side of the drum. Both sides of the strainer are also designed to only contact 1" of the shell and are further insulated with black plastic gaskets.

In addition to the upgrades in hardware, Gretsch also introduced proportionate drum shell thickness in the New Classics to "maximize the tone of each drum." The basic premise is that as the drum's diameter increases, so does the ply thickness. Our review kit ranged from 4.8 mm for the 10" rack tom to 9.1 mm for the 22" kick drum. The snares are each 10 mm thick.

The Vintage Glass Nitron wrap is also worth mentioning. Its classic champagne sparkle look is actually comprised of tiny glass chips embedded in the wrap, which is said to create a shimmering effect under different types of light. I've seen glass-infused finishes on other kits before, and they definitely standout on stage. But ultimately, whether this finish works for you or not is a matter of personal taste. If sparkles aren't your thing, then you'll want to go with the more modest Deep Cherry Gloss finish.

And What's Old?

Rather than starting from scratch when creating the New Classic series, the Gretsch design team incorporated several of the company's classic features. For instance, each drum features 30° bearing edges, which is said to enhance low end and resonance. The blended maple shells are also comprised of a proprietary Gretsch formula that's used in order to best replicate the much sought-after "Gretsch sound."

Additional classic features include silver sealer on the interior of the shells (a fifty-year Gretsch tradition), vintage-style tube lugs (modeled after the classic Gladstone design), and die-cast hoops, which were introduced by the company years ago to allow even tuning and enhanced projection.

Drum By Drum: The Kick

Our review kick was the 8-ply 18x22 model with ten plastic-lined lugs. The legs employ a simple retractable design that's easy to adjust with a large thumbscrew. The spurs feature rubber feet that can be screwed down to reveal a large metal spike when you need extra stability. There's no tom mount on the drum, so rack toms have to be flown from separate stands.

The drum is outfitted with an Evans EQ4 batter head and a solid pre-muffled logo head on the front. Without any muffling, this drum sounded big and boomy. But there was also a lingering "boing" to the resonance, like a bouncing basketball. I remedied this by muffling the drum with either a folded blanket or a pillow. Once the lower interior of the shell was covered, the non-musical overtones were gone, leaving a full, punchy kick sound that would work well in most contemporary musical situations.

The Toms

Each of the toms is outfitted with Evans coated Genera G1 batter heads and clear G1s on the bottom. The die-cast hoops make these drums sensitive to even the slightest tuning adjustments, but also add extra weight. (The 16x16 floor tom scaled in at 16¼ lbs.)

The floor tom legs are held securely in place by large, easy-to-access thumbscrews and memory locks. The legs' large rubber feet are hollowed out to help increase the drum's resonance.

All of the toms feature 6-ply shells of blended maple, but the individual ply thicknesses increase as the drums get larger. During our testing, it was easy to find several sweet spots for each drum. Tuned loose, the floor toms had a solid—but not abrasive—attack with enough low end to get the walls shaking. The rack toms sat nicely at a similar tension, creating a cohe-

sive, deep sound best suited for simple Bonham-esque beats and fills. Higher tunings took the kit closer to fusion territory, where brighter tones were complemented with quicker stick response and rounder attack.

The Snares

Both the 5½x14 and 6½x14 New Classic snares have ten lugs (with plastic washers on each), Evans coated G1 batters and 300 Hazy snare-side heads, standard twenty-strand snare wires, and die-cast hoops on top and bottom. Each drum's shell is 10-ply.

Sonically, the smaller drum worked best at a medium-tight tuning, where rimshots cracked without sounding thin. The 6½, on the other hand, wanted to be *cranked*. Once I got it up to tabletop-land, this drum let out a strong "pop" that inspired me to launch into the few Billy Cobham licks that I can manage to pull off.

Gibraltar 9600 Series Hardware

The New Classic drumkits don't come with hardware; all you get are floor tom legs, two tom arms, and two multi-clamps. But Gretsch also sent along a set of Gibraltar professional-grade 9600 series hardware with the kit. This package contains an infinitely adjustable double-chain cam-drive Intruder bass drum pedal, a 9606 Ultra Adjust snare stand with a rotating ball & socket snare basket, a Liquid Drive hi-hat stand featuring a sophisticated pulling mechanism that creates an even feel as your foot moves up and down, two Brake Tilter boom stands, and one Brake Tilter straight stand. All of these stands are very sturdy and easy to adjust. I especially like the large thumbscrews on the memory locks.

Worth The Wait?

You've probably heard stories about "That Great Gretsch Sound." Whether or not the New Classic Series perfectly captures that acclaimed quality is up for debate. Nevertheless, it's hard to dispute the premium features and professional sound of this new line. And when you combine this with a price that's competitive with that of other professional overseas-made maple kits on the market, you've got a serious contender on your hands.

THE NUMBERS

Four-piece shell pack with Vintage Glass Nitron covering $3,275
Includes 8x10 and 9x12 mounted toms, 14x14 floor tom, 18x22 bass drum, and two single tom arms and clamps.

16x16 floor tom with Vintage Glass Nitron covering $1,200

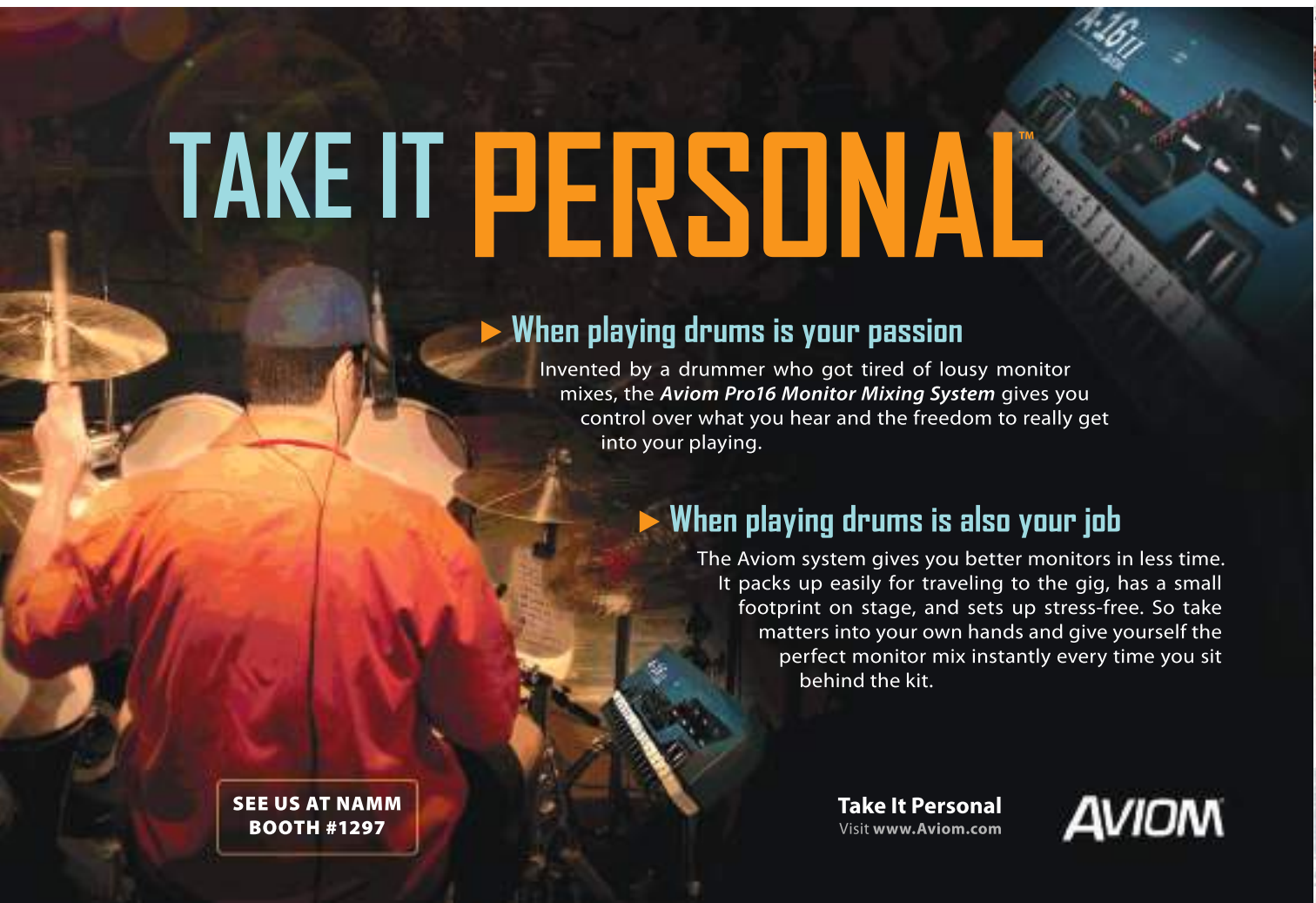
5½x14 snare drum with Vintage Glass Nitron covering $595

6½x14 snare drum with Vintage Glass Nitron covering $645

9600PK hardware package. $835
Includes a 9606 snare stand, a 9607ML-DP hi-hat, two 9609-BT boom stands, a 9610-BT straight stand, and a 9611DC double-chain drive Intruder pedal.

www.gretschdrums.com, www.gibraltarhardware.com

To hear these drums, log on to www.moderndrummer.com.



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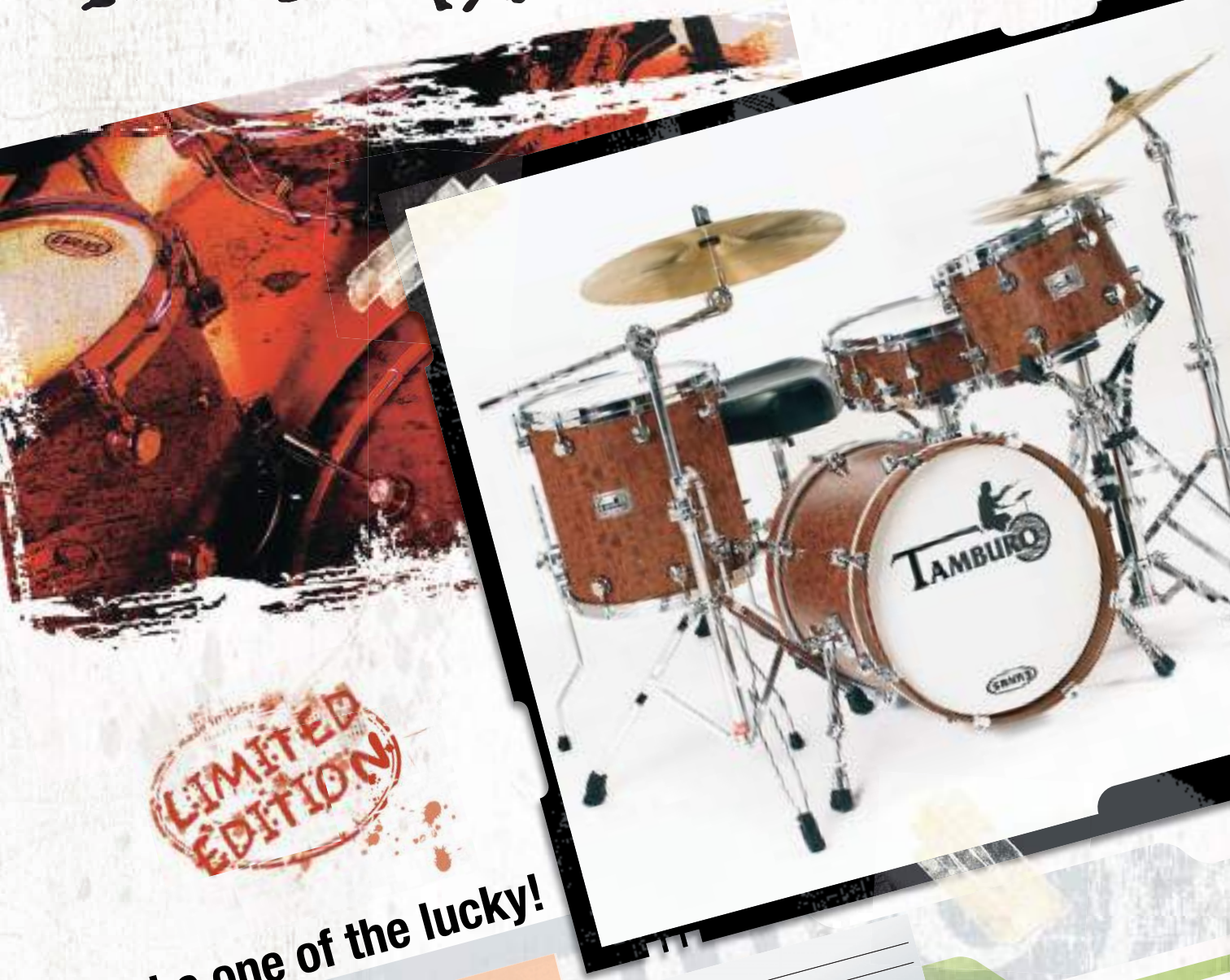

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Pro-Mark 50th Anniversary Limited Edition Snares

Special Drums For A Special Occasion

by Will Romano

KEY NOTES

- Multi-toned acoustic character
- Exotic appearance
- Light weight

Stick company Pro-Mark and Newfoundland-based custom drum maker Pete Stanbridge have collaborated to create two limited-edition snares that commemorate Pro-Mark's fiftieth anniversary this year.

Only a hundred handcrafted snares have been made, with fifty each in $6^1/_2$x14 and $5^1/_2$x14 sizes. We received one of each size, with authenticity certificates proclaiming that they were #2 in their respective production lines. The snares have an undeniably exotic, old-world look. (More about that in a moment.) But would further examination reveal substantive musical value? Let's find out.

High Gloss, Heft, And Hardware

The Anniversary drums are constructed of Japanese Shira Kashi white oak, American maple, and American hickory, representing the materials that have made Pro-Mark a major player in the drumstick industry. The shells are created from horizontal segments of solid oak, which are stacked above and below segments of dark walnut that create the instantly identifiable Pro-Mark stripes. Pete Stanbridge maintains that this stacked design improves the strength and tone of the drum. He uses the minimum amount of glue necessary in order to ensure the shell's structural integrity while retaining maximum resonance.

The hoops are made of finger-jointed segments of light-colored maple and dark pau ferro. The drums come fitted with Remo Renaissance batter heads and Puresound Percussion custom snare wires. Add in a gloss finish, a 50th Anniversary

Pro-Mark badge framed in hickory, and tube lugs and throw-offs finished in burnished 24K gold plating, and each drum is a virtual work of art.

Although the drums appear massive, they're actually quite light (a godsend during packing and transport). This is due to the fact that the shells aren't overly thick, and metal hardware has been kept to a minimum.

6½x14 Snare

Out of the box, this snare needed just a little tightening of the top head. I was intrigued when the snare produced what I heard as metallic "pings" and "cracks." This was not what I was expecting from a tri-wood drum. Without changing the head or further tuning it, I compared this snare with a Yamaha steel snare for sonic perspective. The metal drum did have more piercing ring tones and snap. But there was something about the Pro-Mark model that sounded less "woody" than other wood-shell snares I've played. I needed to do another test.

Knowing that oak has sensational projection, I matched the solid-shell Pro-Mark against my sweet-sounding 5x14 Pearl Free Floating maple-ply snare, which has a lot more metal hardware (and a lot more mileage). With both drums cranked up, the Pearl couldn't match the bite, resonance, or loudness of the Pro-Mark. In this case, the Pro-Mark seemed like a metal-shell snare by comparison.

What did these guys do, build some hybrid bionic wood?

I asked Pete Stanbridge about the snare's uncanny resonance. His response was, "Japanese white oak is a wonderful contrast to more readily available domestic oak, which can be a little harsh and one-dimensional. Perhaps partially due to the addition of the softer black walnut in the center of the shell, these drums have a warm and subtle character with a nice rich set of overtones and a more balanced voice."

Stay Tuned

When I tuned the 6½" drum down, it produced a fatter sound, with lower ringing tones. (The bottom head, a clear Remo Hazy Ambassador, remained tight.) The sound was dark and spongy, yet more colorful. When compared to my Pearl maple drum, the Pro-Mark's sweet spot was a bit juicier, with a deeper pocket. Rimshots produced a piercing *"byawng,"* as if resonating through every fiber of the snare.

As I struck the head at various points, I achieved distinctly different textures. A full, throaty sound emerged between the center of the head and the hard wood rim. A dead-center shot produced a dry, flat thud. And striking the head an inch or so away from the rim produced a tri-toned vocal quality. According to Pete Stanbridge, this variety results from the combination of "slick bearing edges, a light drum shell comprised of hard and soft wood species, and the reduced mass of the hardwood hoops."

The expressiveness of the 6½" Anniversary snare gave me an innovative playing and listening experience. I found the drum to be sensitive and tonally active—perhaps best suited for settings involving textural hard rock, prog rock, world, or even jazz-fusion.

Each anniversary drum is sold with a suitcase-style carrying case and a spare-parts kit.

5½x14 Snare

Compared to its deeper sibling, the 5½x14 snare sounded harsher, brighter, and surprisingly louder. It was also much more focused. When I tightened up this baby, I got pure attack, without a whole lot of body. Break the silence with one of these and you'll see people jump out of their skins. Only upon tuning the 5½" drum down did I even begin to approach the kind of warmth exhibited by the 6½" model.

When I played the 5½" drum with the snares off, as a tom, it produced a high, wavering pitch that fused with the resonance of the accompanying toms. The "snare/tom" had darkness, as well as a dampened quality that blended well with a mix of ride, hi-hats, crashes, and toms. (There were times when the toms were much louder.)

My final analysis of the 5½" Anniversary snare is that it's a great drum with laser-sharp tone and "crack." But it's certainly not interchangeable with its 6½" sibling.

Throw-Off And Strainer

Both drums came fitted with etched, gold-plated Dunnett R2 quick-release throw-off/butt-piece systems. This system employs a swiveling throw-off mechanism that makes it easy to use no matter how the drum is positioned. The R2 also has a keyless entry design that allows you to remove the snare wires for snare-side head changes without using a drumkey. I found this to be a helpful feature, since fiddling with strings or tape through the snare/strainer mechanism in order to center the snares gives me nightmares.

Overall, the throw-off looked good, operated smoothly, and was easy to maneuver. Simply put, it did a nice job.

Conclusion

Pro-Mark and Pete Stanbridge have created drums that look and sound unique. Their sonic characteristics are distinctive and undeniable. Of course, you'll have to judge for yourself whether the tone and attack are right for your particular musical setting.

These snares sound too good to stick on a shelf as collector or vanity items. But their price might dissuade working drummers from slapping down the bucks. My advice? Listen up and choose wisely.

THE NUMBERS

5½x14 ..... $2,895
6½x14 ..... $2,995
(877) 776-6275, www.promark.com

Traps A400 Shell-Less Drumkit

More Than Meets The Eye

by Russ Barbone

KEY NOTES

- Lightweight and portable
- Good sound quality from a compact kit
- Bass drum pedal support rods tend to vibrate

Looking for an alternative to carrying heavy gear that takes up a lot of stage space? The A400, from UK manufacturer Traps Drums, is a compact and portable version of a standard five-piece set. Much attention has been paid to attaining the closest possible feel and sound to that of a regular kit.

The A400 comes with a modular rack-mounting system, three single-headed toms, double-headed snare and bass drums, a conventional hi-hat stand, a bass drum pedal, a suspended snare basket, and two cymbal boom arms. Also included are one ride cymbal, one crash, and a set of hi-hats. The overall footprint of the entire setup is only 36" wide by 23" deep (excluding where you choose to position the hi-hat). Total weight is fifty-five pounds.

Construction

The drum frames on the A400 are made of durable ABS plastic. The drums come fitted with Remo UT heads, which are tensioned by means of standard steel rims. Steel nuts are molded into plastic frames to accept the tension rods.

The rack system combines substantial steel tubing with large mounting brackets made of ABS plastic. Mounts for all drums except the snare use a clever L-arm molded into a segmented waffle affair, which then fits into the mounting brackets. This provides virtually infinite positioning. Captive steel female inserts receive standard drumkey bolts to secure all adjustments. This system avoids stripping anything out.

The design of the rack allows the entire kit to "fold up" for transport, without having to be broken down. How practical this is, considering the fifty-five-pound weight, would be up to you.

The Drums

The bass drum is 20" in diameter and 4" deep, with two steel counterhoops, double heads, and eight tuning lugs per side. Two blue plastic arms extend on each side to mount the drum to the rack. A rubber-coated flange protrudes from the rear of the drum for attaching your bass drum pedal. The front head is black with the Traps logo on it. It also has a 4" rubber dampening pad glued to its center underside to control sympathetic vibrations. Nice!

The 10" and 12" rack toms each have one head and six tuning lugs. The 14" "floor tom" has one head and eight lugs. All toms use Remo UT PS Pinstripe heads.

The snare drum is unique in its execution. It's 12" wide by 3" deep, with two heads. The batter head is a UT BA coated, while the snare head is a UT clear snare head. The drum is fitted with sixteen-strand snares controlled by a blue ABS plastic snare throw-off that works perfectly.

The Hardware

The two cymbal boom arms have memory clamps, substantial tilters, and locking mechanisms that function flawlessly. Their height range is more than adequate. The rack mounts that hold the cymbal arms feature plastic compression sleeves to maintain position securely. The suspended snare basket comes off a vertical rack leg at 90°, and it felt solid even under intense playing.

The hi-hat stand is a professional model with all the features you'd expect. Its heavy, double-braced construction seems a little out of step with the "compact and lightweight" concept of the A400 kit, but it certainly would serve under any playing circumstances.

The bass drum pedal is a single-chain model with a double-sided beater. The clamp for the bass drum hoop is side-mounted for easy access, and there are two adjustable spurs to prevent bass drum creep.

My only complaint with the pedal is that the two sides of the reinforcing rod beneath the footboard come very close to the tops of the spurs as they slope up toward the yoke. During hard playing, they came in contact with those spurs, causing a rattling. Maybe the receiving holes on the yoke could be moved up a little, or the spurs could be a tad shorter, in order to avoid this problem.

Cymbals

The A400 kit comes with an 18" ride, a 14" crash, and 14" hi-hats. These are mid-level sheet bronze models that would be more than adequate for personal practice, band rehearsals, and even some performance settings. However, since many drummers would be likely to use their own cymbals for professional-level gigs, maybe Traps could offer the A400 sans cymbals, at a lower price.

The Sound

Overall, the A400's sound is very good. No, you don't get exactly the same sound as with conventional double-headed shells. But the snare and bass drum "mimic" shallow-depth models quite well. The bass drum isn't going to win any Bonham-imitation awards, but it is solid and punchy. The snare drum is quite surprising, with good snap and projection and no annoying buzzes or rattles.

The 10" and 12" toms complement each other well, with a sound something akin to that of a RotoTom. The 14" "floor" tom, on the other hand, sounds more like a shallow-depth floor tom than a larger RotoTom. When I rolled around the kit, the tom sizes sounded correctly matched, with no sonic holes in the sound palette.

Conclusion

The A400 is quick to set up and tear down, and it's easy to transport. The drums produce pleasing sounds that can easily fool you into thinking you're playing a larger set. And the kit's price in music stores will likely be significantly less than the list price shown. So all in all, the A400 offers a viable alternative to carrying a full-size drumkit around.

THE NUMBERS

A400 ..... **$882**

An E400 electronic triggering version is also available.

Traps sets are distributed by Cappello Music Inc.

(203) 263-6329, www.trapsdrums.com, sales@cappellomusic.com

Istanbul Mehmet Xperience Cymbals

More—And Less—Than Their Name Implies

by Rick Van Horn

KEY NOTES

- X-metal series is loud, bright, and penetrating
- X-cast cymbals are heavy, dense, and dry
- X-jazz series seems inappropriately named

For generations, the dark, trashy, mysterious sound of Turkish-made cymbals was the epitome of desirability...the holy grail of drumming.

That was fine when drummers were playing jazz, big band, and even early pop and rock. But as music got louder, drummers started hitting harder, and their tastes shifted to heavier-duty cymbals that could withstand the abuse. American and European cymbal manufacturers catered to those tastes with rock-oriented lines, leaving Turkish-made cymbal lines to be perceived as classy, but dated. In order to remain competitive, those Turkish companies have recently been trying to establish newer, more volume-oriented lines.

All of the above might explain the new Xperience line from Istanbul Mehmet. At least we hope it does, because otherwise we're not quite sure what the manufacturer's thinking is. Frankly, we've never encountered a batch of cymbals whose performance was so different from the way they were promoted.

The new line features three series, one of which has sub-series of its own. So it's an ambitious introduction. According to Istanbul Mehmet, the Xperience line is "a blend of craftsmanship and knowledge," combining hand cymbalmaking techniques with the latest technology to produce "results [that] satisfy musicians' needs."

The three main series are the X-jazz (with Club and Standard sub-series), X-cast, and X-metal. Of the three, the X-metal is the series that most clearly appears and performs as its name indicates. With the other series, things get a little more vague. So let's start with X-metal and go from there.

X-metal Cymbals

X-metal cymbals are probably the most non–Turkish looking of all the Xperience models. They feature tight lathing and highly polished surfaces top and bottom, except for the bells, whose undersides are left raw and unlathed. We were sent a 20" Power ride, 16" and 18" crashes, 14" hi-hats, and a 12" splash.

According to Istanbul Mehmet, "It's not easy to manufacture a cymbal [that] produces high volume, distortion, and energy, but at the same time can be used in progressive music. X-metal does exactly that." The company's Web site says that this line consists of "thinner cymbals for heavy, speed, power, punk, [and] progressive" metal, and "thicker cymbals for death, hardcore, grindcore, and black" metal. The cymbals we were sent had no indication of which weight range they came from. They appeared to be pretty

standard rock-oriented models: heavy, thick, and with a bright, penetrating sound. That sound was fairly one-dimensional, but when extreme volume and projection is the goal, subtleties are pretty much superfluous.

In this group, the hi-hats were standouts. They had a sharp, clear "chick" sound, and were less "platey" under sticks than one might expect. The ride cymbal sounded clean and clear, and its large flat bell offered a good target for the shoulder of a stick in order to create a piercing bell sound. The two crashes were loud and explosive—if a little gongy—and they had to be hit *very* hard with a big stick to open up. But in a metal situation their gonginess would likely be covered by loud guitars, and most metal drummers *do* hit hard and use big sticks.

So basically, the X-metal cymbals lived up to their designation. They're cymbals made to be hit hard, with heavy sticks, for use in loud rock and metal situations. So far, so good.

X-cast Cymbals

Istanbul Mehmet says that X-cast cymbals produce "dark and low overtones with punchy highs and mids, with a lower sustain level...for those who like to keep their cymbals a little quieter than their drums or perhaps like to mix things up a bit."

Well...we can go along with the "lower sustain level," in the sense that a totally unlathed surface (which the X-cast cymbals have, except for their lathed and polished bells) tends to make a cymbal drier and less sibilant. But the X-cast cymbals are very thick and heavily hammered, making them dense and rigid. (Their thickness and unlathed appearance immediately made me think of Paiste Rude models, which are certainly not known for being quiet.)

We were sent a 20" ride, an 18" crash, 15" hi-hats, and a 22" China. The ride had exactly the same profile and bell size and shape as did the X-metal ride. But if anything, it was heavier and thicker, by virtue of having no lathing. As a result, ride patterns were dark, deep, and dry, but the cymbal developed a gongy roar underneath.

Playing the 18" crash gently was nigh on to impossible; it just would not move unless it was hit soundly with a sizeable stick. And the China was the thickest and stiffest such cymbal I've ever encountered. Crashing on it was out of the question; hitting it hard was akin to slamming a drumstick into a thin gong. Using it as a dark, pang-style ride might be an option...but even then its thickness might read "gong" more than "cymbal."

The 15" hi-hats had the dry, dark sound one would expect from unlathed cymbals. But they also had power and a solid "chick" sound owing to their size and thickness. Again, quiet playing did not suit these cymbals.

X-jazz Cymbals

X-jazz cymbals involve the greatest amount of surface treatment. Their tops feature a raw bell, tight lathing, and a natural finish over two-thirds of the bow, and an outer third that's heavily hammered but unlathed (except for some faint lathing lines at the extreme outer edge). The underside of each cymbal has exactly the reverse: a lathed bell, an unlathed two-thirds of the bow, and a lathed outer third. In this case, the lathed areas are brightly polished.

Istanbul Mehmet states that the X-jazz series is made up of Club and Standard models, and that "for jazz players it has an uncluttered but energetic sound." Further, they say that the series "suits dynamic playing techniques." The cymbals we were sent—a 21" ride, a 16" crash, 14" hi-hats, and a 10" splash—came from the Standard group; Club models are specific smaller sizes.

This was the Xperience series that we thought was the most inappropriately named. When you apply the term "jazz" to cymbals of Turkish origin, most drummers will automatically think of dark, trashy, classic-jazz sounds, and of thinnish cymbals that would have a certain amount of "give" under a stick. That's not what's happening here. These cymbals were fairly thick overall, with their unlathed areas even thicker. As a result, it took a good whack with a 5B stick to set the 16" crash into motion. Any smaller stick just seemed to bounce off. Likewise, the 10" splash had less in common with any jazz splash we've ever heard, and more in common with the chime of a mantel clock.

The ride proved very interesting, with complex tonalities and clear stick response. But these characteristics came with a gongy undertone that tended to overshadow the rest, unless the cymbal was played hard in a loud musical situation. In such a situation, the gonginess was covered, and the other traits came to the fore.

Given the weight of the hi-hats, we were a little disappointed with the "chick" sound, which seemed somewhat muted. But these hi-hats had the nicest sticking sound and the most

responsive "bark" of all the Xperience hats we tested. Not jazzy, mind you, but possibly appropriate for funk, fusion, or prog music where fast hi-hat patterns are employed.

Don't Jump To The Wrong Conclusion

Before you think we disliked the Xperience cymbals, let me set you straight. We thought that, as a group, they offered an interesting range of pitches and acoustic character, from high and bright with the X-metal to dark and earthy with the X-cast. But, again as a group, they were all heavy, thick cymbals. As such, they simply aren't suitable for jazz or any other style of low- to moderate-volume playing—series names to the contrary.

On the other hand, Xperience cymbals could be just the ticket for drummers who play in high-volume situations and would like to expand their musical palette. Not only could those drummers employ X-metal cymbals for the standard "high, bright, and loud" sound, they could also utilize X-cast and X-jazz models to move into dark and different territory—and still feel confident that their cymbals could handle the impact.

Istanbul Mehmet has some quality models to offer in the Xperience line. They just might need to re-think their marketing approach.

THE NUMBERS

X-metal

12" splash	$150
14" hi-hats	$390
16" crash	$240
18" crash	$270
20" Power ride	$330

X-cast

15" hi-hats	$360
18" crash	$255
20" ride	$330
22" China	$375

X-jazz

10" splash	$126
14" hi-hats	$345
16" crash	$216
21" ride	$375

A wide range of additional sizes and models is available in all sub-series. Istanbul Mehmet is currently seeking a new US distributor. In the meantime, retail orders can be serviced from the Turkish factory.

www.istanbulmehmet.com

To hear these cymbals, log on to www.moderndrummer.com.

SNARE DRUM OF THE MONTH

by Michael Dawson

DW COLLECTOR'S SERIES 5½x14 BAMBOO

HOW'S IT SOUND?

The DW bamboo snare proved to be the perfect sound for three separate recording sessions. For the first two tracks (one being a relaxed, medium-slow groove and the other being an alt-country train beat), the producer wanted a deep, warm sound with a lot of spread. So I tuned the drum low, threw on some muffling, and loosened the snares as far as they'd go before they started to rattle. The result was a great fatback sound with tons of low end and surprising clarity.

On the third session, the producer requested a snare "with a lot of body and presence" for a funky, ghost note–heavy groove. Again, I took my usual set of wood and metal drums, but the bamboo ended up being exactly what the producer was looking for. This time, I tuned the drum a few turns higher and tightened the snares in order to keep the soft strokes crisp. At this tension, there was a nice balance of low-end thump and high-end crack, which was perfect for the track.

I also tested the bamboo snare at a moderately loud club gig. Usually in this type of situation, I have to tighten the batter head beyond my preferred range in order to cut through. But this drum never lost its punch when I started cranking the lugs.

Now, I wouldn't say that this drum would work for *every* situation. For instance, it wouldn't be my first choice for super loud rock or metal gigs, where sheer volume is more important than tone. But if you're looking for a new snare to add to your collection that's full of personality on both sides of the frequency spectrum, this one might be a good choice.

WHAT'S IT COST?

5½x14 ..... $1,056

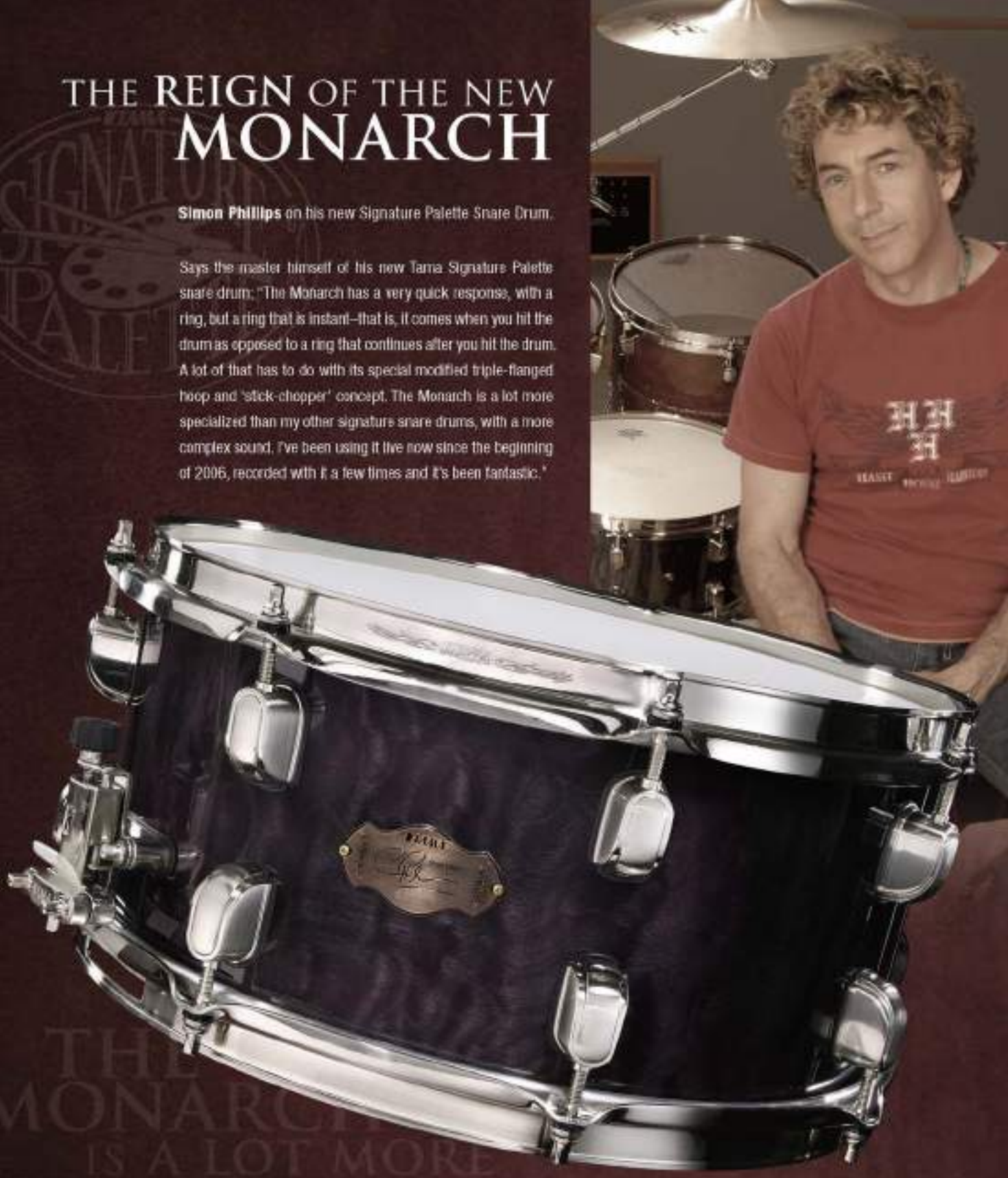
www.dwdrums.com

To hear this drum, log on to www.moderndrummer.com.

THE REIGN OF THE NEW MONARCH

Simon Phillips on his new Signature Palette Snare Drum.

Says the master himself of his new Tama Signature Palette snare drum: "The Monarch has a very quick response, with a ring, but a ring that is instant–that is, it comes when you hit the drum as opposed to a ring that continues after you hit the drum. A lot of that has to do with its special modified triple-flanged hoop and 'stick-chopper' concept. The Monarch is a lot more specialized than my other signature snare drums, with a more complex sound. I've been using it live now since the beginning of 2006, recorded with it a few times and it's been fantastic."



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SP1465H "Monarch" Snare, 3ply 2.2mm Maple + 3ply 2.2mm Bubinga + 2ply 1.5mm Maple

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Evans EC2 Coated Heads And EC Reverse Dot Snare Batters

A Great Way To Mellow Out

by Rick Van Horn

KEY NOTES

- Coated tom/snare heads offer controlled, mellow response
- Reverse Dot snare batters provide bright response and durability
- Playing feel of Reverse Dot heads is slightly stiff

When I reviewed Evans' original EC2 Edge Control clear heads in the May '06 *MD*, my evaluation was that they "split the difference" between the performance of a heavily self-muffled head and that of an unmuffled clear twin-ply head—brighter and more penetrating than the former, but with more control than the latter. They also offered an extensive tuning range.

EC2 Coated Tom/Snare Heads

Evans has now expanded the EC2 series to include coated heads. The coating isn't the familiar white layer, but rather is a translucent "frosted" finish.

Essentially, the new coated heads do everything that their clear siblings do in terms of control, projection, and response. However, where the clear EC2s were moderately bright and resonant, the coated versions are a touch mellower. There was plenty of sticking definition, but the attack didn't sound as "plastic-y" as on some coated heads.

Like all general-purpose heads, the EC2 coated models can serve on toms or snares. The frosted finish provides a nifty brush surface for snare drum applications, and the heads proved surprisingly responsive for twin-ply models. But they really shone on toms, where their moderate level of ring control, maximized low-end response, and mellow tonality helped the drums to sound warm and full.

EC Coated Snare Heads

Also new in the EC series are dedicated snare batters. These heads combine a 6.5-mil top layer with a 10-mil bottom layer, then add the Edge Control ring. The frosted top layer provides sensitivity and brightness. The lower layer provides tonal depth, as well as added durability. The Edge Control ring provides moderate muffling—sufficient on its own for a birch snare we tried it on, but not quite enough to control the overring from a metal one. The overall character is that of a warm, resonant snare batter, rather than a dry, cracking model.

The 13" and 14" heads we were sent also featured Evans' Reverse Dot on their undersides. (EC snare batters are available with or without this feature.) Made of the same material as the Edge Control ring, and "slotted" in the same way, the patch is intended to lend extra durability, focus, and attack in the center of the head. From a playability standpoint, the Reverse Dot makes the head feel slightly stiff under the sticks.

Evans touts the performance of the Reverse Dot snare heads at all tuning and dynamic ranges, and we were surprised by the sensitivity they displayed under low-volume sticking. Still, their design seems best suited for fairly high-impact situations. The added patch reinforces the center of the head against such impact, while providing a sharp, bright sonic response that adds cutting power to the drum sound. As such, while they may not be a jazz drummer's cup of tea, they should definitely appeal to any drummer who lives by the backbeat.

EC Snare batter with Reverse Dot

THE NUMBERS

EC2 Coated Tom/Snare Heads

6"	$27.00	14"	$32.50
8"	$28.00	15"	$34.50
10"	$29.00	16"	$35.00
12"	$30.50	18"	$45.00
13"	$31.50		

EC Coated Snare Heads

10"	$30.00	13"	$33.00
12"	$32.00	14"	$34.00

EC Coated Snare Heads With Reverse Dot

10"	$32.00	13"	$35.00
12"	$34.00	14"	$36.00

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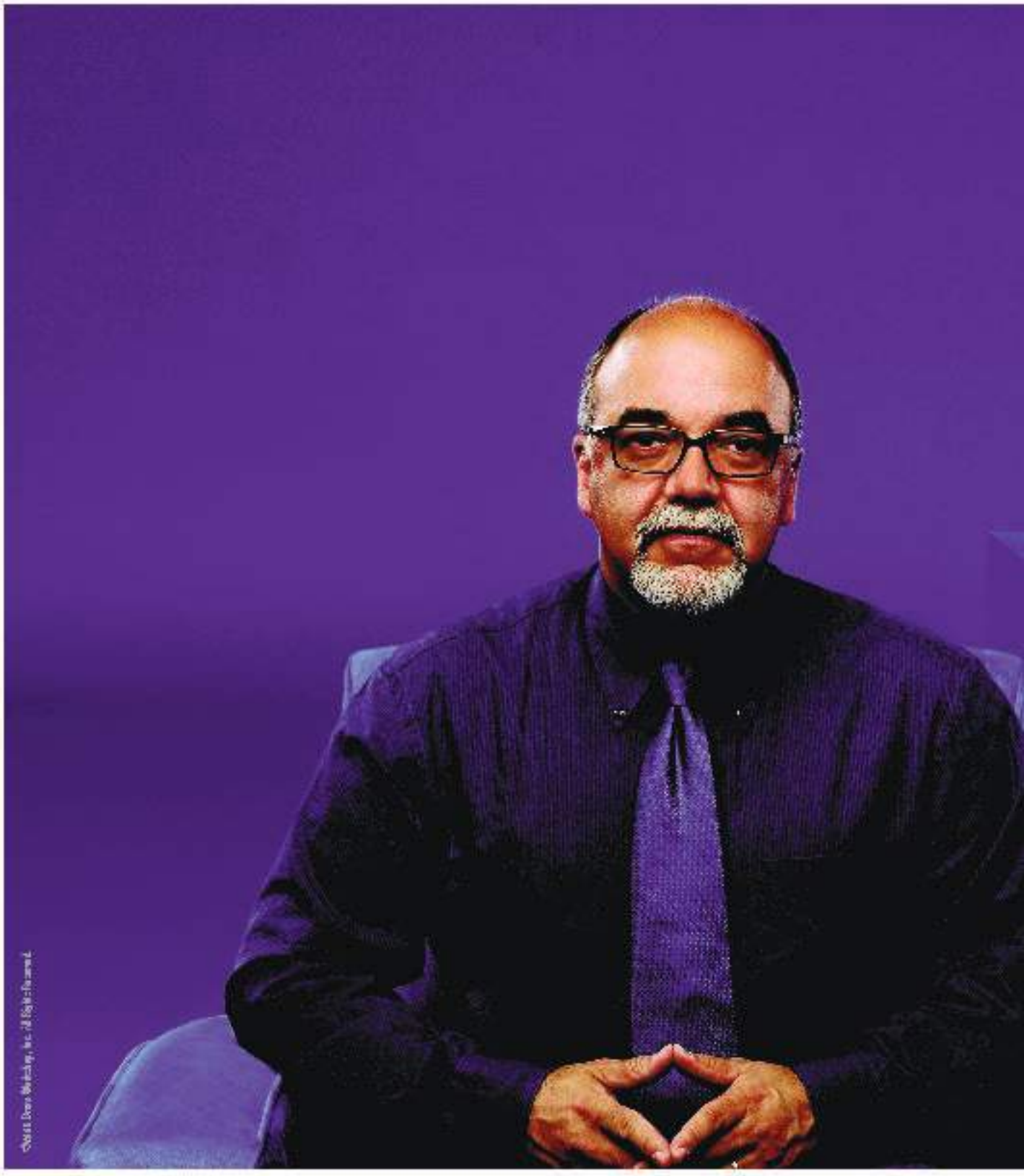

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in inspiring generations of drummers for decades to come.

drums

DECADES

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The Special Edition Tiger Eye EXR kit from Pearl features an 18x22 bass drum, a 9x12 rack tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a $5^1/_2$x14 snare, along with a hardware package that includes a double bass drum pedal. The drums are wrapped in a Delmar finish that captures the vintage spirit, while Pearl's Super Shell Technology (SST) manufacturing process provides acoustic quality and durability.

(615) 833-4477, www.pearldrum.com

Only two hundred Special Edition kits are being offered in this vintage rock configuration, at a list price of $1,599.

<< REMO POWERSONIC BASS DRUM HEADS

Remo's PowerSonic heads are designed to provide controlled mid-range and enhanced low end for a powerful bass drum sound. The 2-ply, 7-mil Mylar heads feature two specifically placed internal subsonic $^3/_4$" dampening rings. In addition, an External Snap-on Dampening System employs snaps mounted directly to the drumhead to eliminate the possibility of vibration. The drummer can customize muffling, feel, and sustain by snapping a strategically placed weighted pillow to the drumhead. Remo's Falam Slam impact pad is also included for added attack and durability. Clear and coated PowerSonic heads are available in 18", 20", 22", and 24" diameters.

(661) 294-5600, www.remo.com

<< ZILDJIAN K LIGHT, A CUSTOM EFX, AND NEW ZHT MODELS

Three new models within Zildjian's K series are designed to offer more sonic options to jazz and rock drummers alike. The new 24" K Light ride ($696) is being used by Travis Barker (+44), Joey Castillo (Queens Of The Stone Age), Ronnie Vannucci (The Killers), Matt Wilson (jazz artist), and JJ Johnson (John Mayer). The cymbal reportedly generates wide variations of sound, with its thin weight providing a dark pitch and significant overtones, as well as "crashability." The cymbal's bell is smaller than normally found on K Zildjian rides, which is said to help produce good stick definition and a controlled wash.

New 13" ($534) and 14" ($600) K Light hats are lower in pitch than traditional K Zildjian hi-hats. They pair a medium-thin top (for a broad range of tonal colors) with a medium bottom to ensure a solid "chick" sound.

K Light ride and hi-hats

Also new are 16" and 18" A Custom EFX models. These cymbals feature specific "cut-outs" that interrupt the sound moving over the body of the cymbal to produce a trashy, white noise sound effect. Suitable for all genres of music, the A Custom EFX is being used by Carter Beauford (Dave Matthews Band), Antonio Sanchez (Pat Metheny Group), and Aaron Spears (Usher, American Idol tour).

A Custom EFX crashes

Finally, Zildjian has expanded their mid-priced ZHT sheet bronze line. The new models include a 20" crash ride that offers high-volume crash potential, as well as the ability to be used as a light ride for jazz settings. Also new are 15" and 17" Fast crashes (which open up quickly for clean accents), and 13" Mastersound hi-hats. The hats' small diameter controls overall tonal output, while the rippled edge on the bottom cymbal boosts the "chick" and the overall tonal presence.

(781) 871-2200, www.zildjian.com

New ZHT models

<< RHYTHM TECH ADVANCED PRO TAMBOURINE MOUNT AND LIMITED EDITION PINK TAMBOURINE

Do you ever want to be able to play your mounted tambourine by hand—fast? Rhythm Tech's Pro Tambourine Mount holds their Pro Tambourine through the use of two posts that fit into the instrument's pre-existing mounting holes. This facilitates quick changes between hand-held and mounted playing styles. The mount accepts a standard $^3/_8$" rod and can be positioned on a variety of drum stands, racks, and arms using Rhythm Tech's DSM-2 adapter. List price is $15.95.

Also new is a limited edition of Rhythm Tech's original crescent-shaped tambourine, in a pink color developed to raise awareness and financial support for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. Rhythm Tech will make a donation to the Foundation every time one of the special tambourines is sold. The pink tambourine (model #50PK) lists for $45.

(914) 636-6900, www.rhythmtech.com

<< WESTONE/GENNUM IN-EAR SOUND DESIGN MONITORING KIT

The In-Ear Sound Design (IESD) system from Westone and Gennum combines the benefits of digital signal processing and in-ear monitoring. The system captures ambient sound via miniature ear-level stereo microphones. Ambient and monitor signals are then combined and sent to the performer's earpieces.

In-Ear Sound Design is a complete signal processing toolkit featuring an SD1 Bodypack controller, Sound Design Audio Manager software, and proprietary cables with sub-miniature microphones. Users can edit sonic presets on their PCs or Macs, then download up to four at a time onto the SD1 Bodypack for use in live performance. IESD is compatible with the majority of custom in-ear monitor systems.

(719) 540-9333, www.inearsounddesign.com

<< TRX 20" CRASH-RIDE CYMBALS

TRX Cymbals now offers 20" Crash-Ride cymbals in DRK, MDM, ALT, and BRT models. The Crash-Rides are based on the classic, dual-purpose cymbals of the 1960s. Their design combines the pronounced bell and lower profile of a ride cymbal with the medium weight and taper of a crash cymbal. The resulting cymbals are said to feature the roar of a crash and the definition of a ride, making them ideal for a variety of classic, modern, and progressive rock situations. The cymbals have a list price of $450.

(818) 753-1310, www.trxcymbals.com

<< DRUM TECH DTS ONE-TOUCH TUNING SYSTEM

Let's face it: Dealing with eight or more lugs every time you need to tune a drum is a drag. The DTS One-Touch Tuning System uses a cable system to facilitate tuning a drumhead with only one adjustment. The DTS also streamlines the process of finding the proper pitch relationship between the top and bottom heads. That relationship is determined by striking the top head and sweeping the bottom head through its range, much like tuning a guitar.

The DTS system retrofits to most acoustic drums and is available for drums from 8" to 18" in diameter, and for six-, eight-, and ten-lug configurations. List price ranges from $49.99 to $59.99 per head kit.

(413) 538-7586, www.drumtech.com

Tuning can take place while the drum is being played, so that the sound can quickly be tailored to virtually any acoustical environment or style of music.

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"**EXTREMELY EXPRESSIVE AND DYNAMIC** – an essential tool for today's music."

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"**THE V-DRUMS FEEL AMAZING** – you have to experience it."

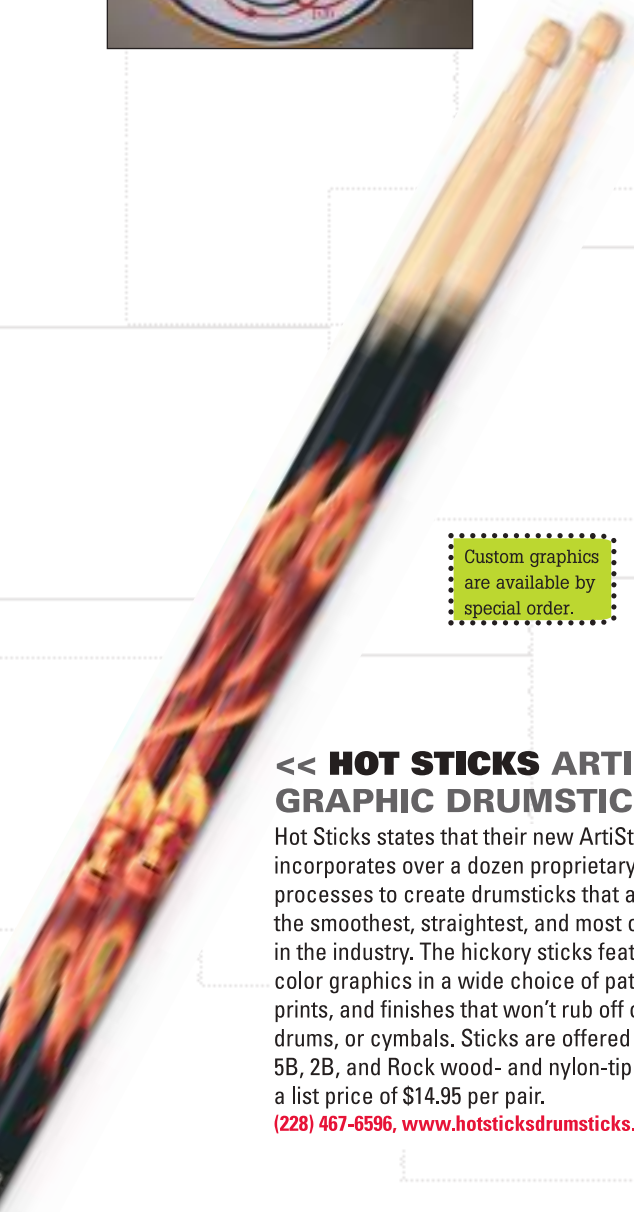
"The feel is **THE CLOSEST TO EMULATING AN ACOUSTIC DRUMHEAD** that I've found."

<< PROLOGIX ALL-N-1 RUSS MILLER SIGNATURE PRACTICE PAD

Working out your chops is never a one-dimensional pursuit. With that in mind, the ProLogix All-N-1 Russ Miller Signature Pad features three playing surfaces. One surface provides realistic stick rebound. A FiberSkyn insert produces authentic brush sound and feel. A third insert is used for muted practice. The 13" pad features a raised rim and a non-slip bottom, and can sit atop a snare drum, lie on a tabletop, or mount to any snare stand. Also included are eight Brush Maps for use in brush studies. List price is $185.

www.prologixpercussion.com, www.russmiller.com

The separately sold Russ Miller Groove Wedge can be added to the All-N-1 pad for practicing clave, cascara, and other cross-stick musical patterns.



Custom graphics are available by special order.

<< HOT STICKS ARTISTICKS GRAPHIC DRUMSTICKS

Hot Sticks states that their new ArtiSticks line incorporates over a dozen proprietary production processes to create drumsticks that are among the smoothest, straightest, and most consistent in the industry. The hickory sticks feature full-color graphics in a wide choice of patterns, prints, and finishes that won't rub off on hands, drums, or cymbals. Sticks are offered in 7A, 5A, 5B, 2B, and Rock wood- and nylon-tip models, at a list price of $14.95 per pair.

(228) 467-6596, www.hotsticksdrumsticks.com

<< The Reference Shelf >>

AUDW 2004 (DVD)

(Music Tek/Hudson Music)

AUDW 2004 is a six-hour, two-disc DVD set that presents performances, lessons, interviews, and workshop highlights from the 2004 edition of Australia's Ultimate Drummer's Weekend, produced by MusicTek Australia. Artists appearing include Australian drummer Dave Beck, as well as international drummers Marco Minnemann, Chad Wackerman, Michael Schack, Gregg Bissonette, Dom Famularo, and Steve Smith. List price is $39.95.

(888) 796-2992, www.hudsonmusic.com

Tito Puente— King Of Latin Music (Book/DVD)

by Jim Payne (Hudson Music)

This comprehensive 88-page biography documents the life and music of the musician known internationally as "The King Of Latin Music." The story is told through first-person anecdotes and interviews with the late master drummer. Throughout the book, Tito provides humor, history and insights into his music and its masters and discusses the foundation of Latin jazz and the evolution of mambo, rumba, and danzón. The bonus DVD features never-before-seen interviews of Tito talking about his incredible career. List price is $22.95.

(888) 796-2992, www.hudsonmusic.com

Notion Music Software And Sound Kits (Notion Music)

Notion music software is designed as a tool for composition, practice, and live performance. Recent upgrades include the ability to notate for drumset (multiple instruments on one staff), alternate note heads (x, triangle, and slash), a "stir" feature for realistic-sounding jazz brush techniques on snare drum, ghost note notation and performance, and cross-stick and rimshot notation and performance for snare drum.

Also new are two sound libraries. *Sessions: Rhythm Section* features bass and drumset samples performed by Victor and Roy Wooten, as well as electric guitar samples performed by Vernon Reid. *Expanded Mallets 1* includes marimba, vibraphone, crotales, and chimes. These new titles join *Expanded Percussion 1*, which features castanets, cowbells, cuckoo, drumsticks, maracas, power toms, ratchet, RotoToms, shakers, sleigh bells, temple blocks, and woodblock.

www.notionmusic.com

Pro Tools Level 1 (DVD)

(Ask Video)

In this first of three DVD tutorials, Pro Tools expert Brian Hogue covers the foundation needed to harness the power of the Pro Tools program. It is said to be ideal for new users of Pro Tools LE or HD. The DVD includes more than two hours of instruction covering installation, set-up, recording, MIDI, editing, signal flow, bussing, automation, and bouncing to disk. An easy-to-use interface makes it convenient to learn progressively or to find topics quickly as a reference or refresher. List price is $55.

www.askvideo.com.

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DVD OUT NOW!

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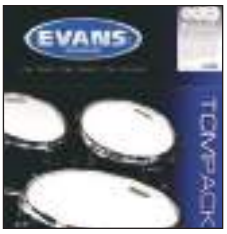
SONOR

<< AND WHAT'S MORE >>

According to **HEAD DRUMS**, their newly designed lugs open the drum shell up tonally because there is no mechanical stiffness being added to the shell (as can be the case with tube and die-cast lugs). The new lugs weigh a third less than Head's previous models, providing an overall weight reduction on the drums in addition to the improvement in tone.
(303) 986-5207, www.headdrums.com

TECHRA polymer carbon drumsticks have been designed to have the same weight as wooden sticks, and to be precisely balanced for optimal control. They are equipped with an anti-vibration feature that helps to dissipate the natural vibrations of the sticks. Their synthetic construction provides greater durability than wood for overall cost-effectiveness. The Italian-made sticks are available in jazz- and rock-oriented models.
www.techra.it



EVANS Tom Packs are now available in the manufacturer's most popular models, in contemporary fusion and standard configurations. They're intended to enable players to switch over a full set of tom heads at a significant savings, while keeping their snare batter head options open. List prices range from $60 to $88.
(800) 323-2746, www.evansdrumheads.com

The **REMO** Store (powered by Shopatron) is a new feature at www.remo.com. Visitors have the ability to purchase a select list of Remo percussion instruments and wearables at Remo.com/store. The moment the order is placed, Shopatron's selection process determines the nearest participating Remo dealer stocking the item. Since selections are already in stock at the relevant dealer, shipping can commence right away. And since orders are typically filled locally, delivery time is significantly reduced.

The **DRUMFUN.COM** Web site features information on all six currently available *Turn It Up & Lay It Down* play-along audio CDs, and includes free downloadable sample tracks. The tracks allow drummers and percussionists to work on improving their groove. The new site also features downloads of charts/lead sheets for every track from every CD volume, as well as an "Ask The Artist" section where famous drummers talk about their approaches to the play-along material and their drumming.
www.drumfun.com

The **LUDWIG/MUSSER** Web site, www.ludwig-drums.com, has been completely redesigned. In addition to new creative elements, the site includes extensive product information and consumer contests.

YOU ONLY NEED ONE.

How many snare drums does it take to make a hit record? How many do you bring to rehearsal or on stage? How many did your heroes have back in the day? To play today's music you need a lot of sounds— not a lot of drums. That's why more and more of today's players play the Craviotto Unlimited Series. Only Unlimiteds feature Craviotto's legendary one-piece maple shell for monstrous tone, unbelievable response and infinite versatility in any situation. When you only need one, it's the only one you need.

Handcrafted in USA, Craviotto Unlimited Series snare drums are now available in 6.5″ and 5.5″ x 13″ and 14″ models with Natural, Red, Blue and Black satin oil plus new Cherry and Lime Glitter, Vintage White Marine and Black Diamond wrap finishes.

www.craviottodrums.com

INTRODUCING: DAVID SILVERIA'S DSK TOUR

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Each and every Vater stick is rolled by Alan Vater...meanwhile, owners of other leading drumstick companies don't even live in the same state as their stick factory!

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David's new DSK Tour is a scaled down version of his original DSK model. The shorter length provides a "quick" feel when going around the kit, while the heavy shoulder provides outstanding durability for aggressive live performances.

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VINNIE COLAIUTA

BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW, MODERN DRUMMER DIGS DEEP INTO THE MIND OF ONE OF DRUMMING'S GREATEST MASTERS.

Vinnie Colaiuta has a message for you: Kill your idols. And that may mean killing every notion of technical mastery or virtuosic artistry that you associate with the drumming genius from rural Pennsylvania. For Colaiuta is passionate about many things, but nothing fires his ire like the overindulgent, lazy, non-musical thinking that he believes permeates many corners of the popular drumming community. He has long since tired of those who approach him with eyes wide, demanding answers of the eternal questions: "How did you possibly play that, invent that, create that, accomplish that, and master that?"

"My outlook on drumming is very visceral and sort of conceptual and wide now," Vinnie explains from Madrid while on tour with pianist/composer Herbie Hancock. "It's not tunnel vision. And because of that, my concept is, 'Look, if you hear me play, you're going to get it or you're not going to get it.' You're going to get what you're going to get out of it. And the rest of it is, we're all human and we all have the same challenges and processes that we have to go through."

We may all be human, but some of us are more *in*-human and gifted than others. Whether you marvel at Vinnie's extended improvisations with Frank Zappa, Randy Waldman, Allan Holdsworth, Karizma, or Jing Chi, or you simply enjoy the grace of his timekeeping with the pop elite, including Celine Dion, Ricky Martin, LeAnn Rhimes, Faith Hill, Megadeth, Andrea Bocelli, and Sting, there's no denying that his drumming is special on numerous fronts.

Easily the busiest session drummer in the world, Vinnie Colaiuta lives for the music. That cliché is as commonly stated as the adage "You have to play for the music." But Vinnie's career is a testament to not only his immeasurable skill and talent, but to his ability to successfully maneuver all the angles of the music business. He's found an ideal balance between gigs that enable him to mine the deepest recesses of his massive technical and improvisational ability, and those that offer the joy of playing the perfect pop drum part. (Though this would be "black-and-white" thinking in his estimation.)

Every drummer has his or her favorite Vinnie track, whether it's "Joe's Garage" (Frank Zappa), "Spokes" (Allan Holdsworth), "Stay With Me" (Gino Vanelli), "Seven Days" (Sting), or "Aja" (*The Royal Dan*). But all these recordings have one thing in common: consistency. The man does it all, with a trademark, signature sound and unerringly musical approach.

STORY BY KEN MICALLEF • PHOTOS BY ALEX SOLCA

Alex Soleu

Over his nearly thirty-year career, the now fifty-year-old drummer has maintained a grueling schedule, owing to the fact that everyone seemingly wants a piece of his talent. And somehow it has only served to make him better. The contemporary Colaiuta plays better groove today than he did twenty years ago, and when the chance to burn arises, he is no less thrilling with Scott Kinsey (or on numerous Tone Center projects) than when he played "Five Five Five" with Frank Zappa in 1978.

Perhaps no interview can fully reveal Vinnie Colaiuta's concepts, his session approach, his improvisational methods, his technique, or his talent. Perhaps we can only catch a glimpse of him in the moment. Vinnie is a hard man to pin down, and a harder one to interview. He sees the big picture where most see tiny pixels, and he relates his experiences through a lens that few can understand, and even fewer have seen. He won't be constricted to sound-bite answers. Vinnie Colaiuta is, like all great artists, inscrutable, complex, visionary.

MD: You have said that when you go into a session now you can gauge where the musicians are coming from, that you can scope out their attitude. How does one do that?

Vinnie: If you're sensitive to people and musicians, it would follow that you would read people as well. Yet you could also have this bizarre psychological filtering going on. So if you're sensitive to other musicians, you could be overly sensitive.

Let's look at the semantics of what it means to be sensitive. I'm not talking about being sensitive in the overly emotional sense, but rather in a perceptive sense. If you have psychological issues, that's your own thing to be aware of, whether or not you're affected by what people say or don't say. That points back to how stable and confident you are. So when I talk about being confident, I'm talking about being stable and secure. I'm *not* talking about being arrogant.

If I'm talking about gauging what a musician wants, that is developed intuition. Really, just being there so that you can function in the musical environment, optimally. You're not there to show off a bunch of crap or be the center of attention, you're there to blend in and be a part of it. If you do something that's inspired that other drummers might listen to, you're not doing that to bring attention to yourself. If you do it in such a way that it enhances the song, and the other musicians notice it without thinking, "That guy did that and it distracted me," then you've really arrived.

The Technique Question

MD: Does the "blending" concept pertain to a Faith Hill gig, where the audience has no idea that you've played more complicated music, but you provide a perfect cushion for her?

Vinnie: Yes and no, but it's beyond that. It's not about me providing a cushion for her. You could say that that's one of my functions. It's about me being there and in it and integrating so that we all feel comfortable and the music becomes something a little better. That the audience has no idea what I can do is inconsequential. If everything that I've learned can somehow blend together in order for me to do that without people being aware of it, well, that's a good thing. It's all contributing indirectly to what I'm doing at the moment. If anything I've done in the past doesn't make the moment better, then it doesn't matter. It all contributes if you've allowed it to integrate inside yourself seamlessly so that you're not thinking, "Man, I have all these chops and I can't use them." If you're thinking that, you're really not "in it." You're not allowing everything that you've learned to place you in the present moment, regardless of how much or how little you've played.

There's a lot of black-and-white thinking, like, "He has these chops that he doesn't use." Or some guys say, "I have chops and I can groove." Like it's just about chops and groove. So guys try to escape the chops stigma by saying, "I can groove too." That is really black-and-white. There is so much more than that, there's a whole color spectrum and awareness that isn't represented in that line of thinking.

MD: Drummers always say, "You have to play for the song."

Vinnie: First of all, you have to *want* to play for the song. You have to enjoy doing that. Then you'll start seeing the musical value and fulfillment in that. You'll sense it, feel it, and know it. You'll sense the synergy in it. You won't even think, "Man, I could have done this really cool lick there." That is defeatist, non-musical thinking.

Any time you strike the drums you have to be aware that you're creating a musical event. If you think of it as something more or less technical, you're thinking reductionistically. If you think, "I have to play the song good," it can become a chore to develop so people will like you, versus, "I see the value of this and it makes sense." That's not to say that you can play anything and use your own criteria to deem it a musical event. There are laws of music. I could sit down and play a drum solo and think, "I will baffle them."

What I see happening a lot within drumming is a microcosmic example of what's happening in society, which is sensationalism. Sensationalism was once the domain of sideshow barkers selling cure-all tonics and tickets to see the bearded lady, but there was always a place for art. But now if it's not sensational, its value is dimin-

Alex Solca

Vinnie's Classic Kit

Drums: Gretsch Vinnie Colaiuta Signature or New Classic Series

- **A.** 5x14 snare (various)
- **B.** 7x10 tom
- **C.** 8x12 tom
- **D.** 14x14 floor tom
- **E.** 16x16 floor tom
- **F.** 18x22 bass drum

Vinnie also uses a 5x10 snare positioned to the left of his hi-hat (not in photo).

Cymbals: Zildjian

1. 22" Oriental China Trash
2. 14" A Custom Mastersound hi-hats
3. 17" A Custom crash
4. 10" A Custom splash (smaller splash in photo)
5. 22" A Custom ride
6. 15" A Custom crash
7. 19" A Custom crash

Hardware: Gibraltar rack and/or stands, DW pedals, Factory Metal Percussion

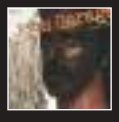
Heads: various Remo models

Sticks: Zildjian Vinnie Colaiuta Signature model, wire brushes

Electronics: Roland, including a HandSonic

RECOMMENDED LISTENING
COLAIUTA ON RECORD

Artist	Album
Vinnie Colaiuta	Vinnie Colaiuta
Allan Holdsworth	Secrets
Jing Chi	Jing Chi Live At Yoshi's
Jing Chi	3D
Quincy Jones Orchestra	Basie And Beyond
Karizma	Document
Karizma	Lost & Found
Frank Macchia	Mo' Animals
Joni Mitchell	Wild Things Run Fast
John Patitucci	Sketchbook
Jeff Richman	Visions Of An Inner Mounting Apocalypse: A Fusion Guitar Tribute
Sting	Mercury Falling
Sting	Brand New Day
Gino Vanelli	Nightwalker
Randy Waldman	Wigged Out
Randy Waldman	UnReel
Frank Zappa	Shut Up And Play Yer Guitar
Frank Zappa	Joe's Garage, Acts I, II & III



HIS FAVORITES

Artist	Album	Drummer
Miles Davis	Nefertiti	Tony Williams
John McLaughlin	Live At The Royal Albert Hall	Trilok Gurtu
Weather Report	Live In Tokyo	Eric Gravatt
Tony Williams	Ego	Tony Williams
Tony Williams	Emergency	Tony Williams
Tony Williams	Believe It	Tony Williams
The Meters	Rejuvenation	Zigaboo Modeliste
Mahavishnu Orchestra	Inner Mounting Flame	Billy Cobham
Mahavishnu Orchestra	Birds Of Fire	Billy Cobham
Herbie Hancock	Flood	Mike Clark

(Plus Elvin Jones, John Bonham, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Joey Baron, Al Foster, Peter Erskine, Steve Smith, Steve Gadd, Harvey Mason, David Garibaldi, and Jack DeJohnette.)

ished. That kind of mentality contributes to short attention spans, the inability to read a book or to be able to read and write something more substantial than a cursory email. If I play a drum solo, yeah, it will reveal a lot about how much I practiced and that I can twirl sticks and do different rhythms with each foot. That comes from hours of practicing, focus, repetition, and integration, and if you're not mentally, physically, or memory-impaired and you have a modicum of talent and you put enough time into it and you want to do that, you will achieve it.

But then you're creating your *own* context. If you do that stuff freeform and do it to wow and dazzle people, then I ask you this: Take all those licks you've blended together and slow the tempo down or change the tempo, and A) put it in a specific context that requires you to obey particular parameters in terms of an idiomatic form that you're going to play; B) play it within a stylistic genre; C) play it within a song form; and D) do that with other musicians in real time reactively as well. Now the story changes.

People wonder why I don't do clinics. *That's* why. Because you're not getting the context. It's like I'm selling you something. Where is the context? You can't just sit there and be bereft of context. But do kids want to hear that? Hell, no. They just want razzle-dazzle—or a software program that lets them create this stuff in ten minutes without any musical training.

MD: Do you really believe that? I think many kids love to play drums simply to be a part of the music and to play for the song without any technical concerns. Are you speaking to the mad drumming contingent who lives for technique?

Vinnie: What percentage of what you see in clinics is kids just sitting down on the drums and playing a song without really showcasing any kind of technique, versus kids who are coming out of the woodwork basically lighting fires with their sticks every two minutes?

MD: Yes, people want razzle-dazzle at a drum clinic.

Vinnie: What does the term "clinic" mean to you? A clinic is a short condensed educational presentation. Would that be a good working definition of it?

MD: Yes.

Vinnie: So how does razzle-dazzle apply to an educational presentation? Let me break the physical limits of what's possible on the drumset, and then what? What else does it mean?

MD: I would think it's about learning to play music.

Vinnie: Yes, but how do you apply that? How does that emerge causally from putting the focus on razzle-dazzle? How do you learn the musical aspect of that? That

Pascal Milette

takes *years*. It takes musical interactivity. If you rip the drums apart all the time, how does that apply to a musical situation with other people? How does the musical education follow from putting all the emphasis on sensationalism?

MD: It doesn't.

Vinnie: *That's* the correct answer. That's all I'm saying. I'm not saying this to you as some grumpy guy who doesn't have any chops denouncing people who do. No. I have chops. And I deeply respect everyone who does. This is just my viewpoint. You're really hearing about how I think and my perspective.

But people say, "Yeah, well you do it." I do it and I don't do it. You play with passion and you do things for certain effects for certain reasons, but I don't sit down with a freaking meter on my leg to see how many singles I can play.

MD: You sound totally sick of the entire "Let's hear Vinnie go wild" line of thinking.

Vinnie: I wouldn't say I'm fed up or sick of it....

MD: You sound pretty fed up to me. I mean, wow!

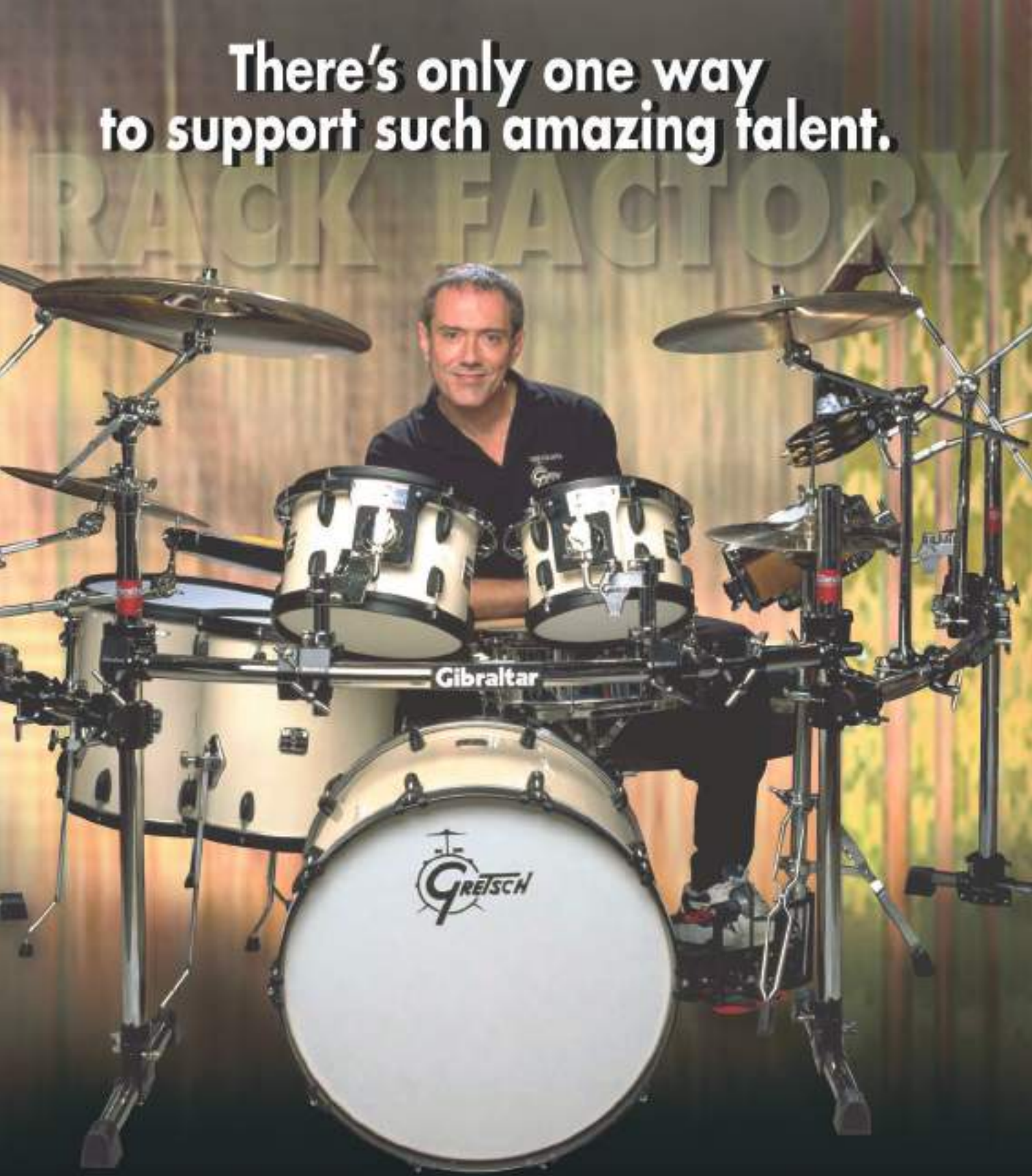
Vinnie: I'm just not interested in it, you know?

MD: I think there are many drummers out there who love to hear you play as you did on the early Kenny Pore records, or with Bill Meyer or Steely Dan, or any number of records where your groove is as beautiful as any other aspect of your playing. When I first heard you on Al Kooper's *Championship Wrestling* record, your groove really stood out. Drummers like Zach Danziger here in New York really took notice.

Vinnie: Zach Danziger is very talented. You can hear him with Wayne Krantz and he sounds great. I'm talking about people having tunnel vision and sitting there and

continued on page 62

There's only one way to support such amazing talent.



No one can dispute the Musical Genius of Vinnie Colaiuta.

Vinnie spends most of his day in the studio recording with major artists, day after day. The demand on his gear is great. So Vinnie demands the Gibraltar Rack System.

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Vinnie Colaiuta Style & Analysis

Transcribed by anthony Giles

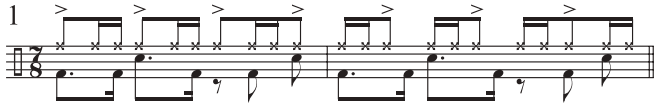
Vinnie Colaiuta has been at the forefront of the development of modern drumset vocabulary since he first blasted on the scene with Frank Zappa in the 1970s. In fact, Vinnie is regarded by many to be one of the most versatile drummers of all time.

During a career that spans nearly thirty years, Vinnie has displayed a remarkable ability to assimilate the approaches and nuances of many different styles of music, from the intense intricacies of Frank Zappa to the sophisticated pop of Bette Midler. And on each gig, he always sounds authentic.

Rather than focusing on just one area of Vinnie's drumming, we're going to examine a few broad-based concepts that appear in his playing in a variety of musical settings.

Odd-Meter Grooves

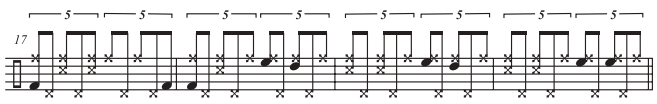
In odd-meter settings, Vinnie often grounds the music by creating long over-the-barline phrases that make the non-conventional time signatures feel natural. In "Saint Augustine In Hell," from Sting's 1993 release, *Ten Summoner's Tales*, Vinnie emphasizes quarter notes in his ride cymbal over the song's 7/8 time signature. This type of phrasing causes the ride to flip to the offbeat on every other measure. (0:07)



On Sting's 1996 album, *Mercury Falling*, Vinnie uses a similar idea on the song "I Hung My Head." (2:15)

For "Seven Days," off *Ten Summoner's Tales*, Vinnie accentuates every fourth 8th note on his hi-hat while playing in 5/4 with his bass and snare. (1:48)

The next example appears in "Packard Goose," originally from Frank Zappa's 1979 recording, *Joe's Garage* (now available on *Joe's Garage, Acts I, II & III*). It's a perfect example of Vinnie's effortless ability to play polyrhythms. In measure 5, he modulates to a new feel by playing five-note groupings over the dotted quarter note. In measure 11, he creates a polyrhythm within a polyrhythm by playing a two-note grouping within the second five. (3:06)



Jazz

In a modern jazz context, Vinnie plays with a fluid sense of time. He rapidly shifts between triplets and 16th-note time feels and applies an extensive knowledge of polyrhythms. He also creates tension within the music by contrasting dense, choppy sections with passages that are less complex. It should be noted that Vinnie applies these advanced concepts in a musical way that doesn't sound purely technical.

Example 5 is taken from "54 Duncan Terrace," off Allan Holdsworth's 1989 release, *Secrets*. (0:22)

Example 6 appears in "Painting A Wish" from Richard Bona's 2003 CD *Munia: The Tale*. (3:34)

Soloing

Vinnie is able to convey his solo ideas fluently because of his mastery of a diverse musical vocabulary. He also plays with an acute knowledge of musical form, which makes his solos interesting to more than just drummers.

Example 7 (on page 60) appears at 1:04 on the track "John's Blues" from Vinnie's 1994 self-titled solo album. Sections of the solo have been labelled that demonstrate the following musical concepts:

A: Hemiola (implying a "two feel" over triple time)
B: Rudimental patterns
C: 16th-note triplets played in groups of four

Example 8 is a drum lick that has been nicknamed the "blush-da." In technical terms, it's a Swiss army triplet with a double stroke on the second partial. This lick was first pioneered by jazz legend Tony Williams, who is one of Vinnie's acknowledged influences. Vinnie uses this pattern in many of his solos.

Example 9 shows Vinnie's solo on "Indian Time Zones" from Warren Cuccurullo's 1996 album *Thanks 2 Frank*. This solo shows Vinnie's extensive use of linear phrasing in several different groupings. (5:45)
Some notable sections have been labelled as follows:
A. Rhythmic motif that repeats every three 8th notes
B. Linear groupings of five (RLRLF) orchestrated around the drums
C. Five-note sticking (RLLRL)
D. Single strokes between the right hand and foot
E. Linear three-note groupings (RLF)
F. Linear seven-note groupings (RLRLRLF)
G.16th-note open/closed hi-hat pattern grouped in threes

To hear some of the transcriptions in this article, log on to www.moderndrummer.com.

This article is only a brief synopsis of Vinnie's incredible musicianship. Hopefully, the ideas presented here will lead those of you who aren't familiar with Vinnie's virtuosity to pickup some recordings and check him out. There's a lot to be learned from this modern master, so a close examination of his playing is sure to have a positive impact on your own approach to the drumset.

Anthony Giles heads the percussion and guitar department at the Merriam School Of Music in Oakville, Ontario. For more information on Anthony, go to www.anthonygiles.com. Anthony would like to thank David MacDougall and Geoff Hen for their input.

Carter Beauford
Dave Matthews Band

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continued from page 57

analyzing what Zach does and seeing the technique versus understanding that he has musical freedom. I bet I can speak for Zach, that he doesn't sit there with a freaking drum-o-meter!

MD: Zach tired of the razzle-dazzle.

Vinnie: Because it's a dead end, man. There is no fastest gun. There's always going to be another Wyatt Earp. You challenge yourself because you want to feel freer and integrated with the instrument and with music. That's really what you're doing. Zach said something very valuable; he told me, "I've found another way to express myself that is satisfying to me." It's easy to twist that and say, "I will rip the walls apart and express myself." Fine. But Zach is saying that he's expressing himself musically because of his awareness and what his idea of musicality is. And the reason why he sounds so good with Wayne Krantz or Boomish is because of his musical depth.

Guys will come up to me and say, "I stole all your licks." I say, "Well, they're free, you didn't have to steal them." This idea of looking at them like they are licks.... "They were Vinnie's licks and now they're mine." Like it's espionage. "Take this pill and you too can..."—fill in the blank. That is missing the point. It's tunnel vision. You don't listen to Wayne Shorter and try to steal his licks. Conceptually, he's an extremely highly developed musician. There's nothing wrong with personal development through playing an instrument, but what happens when it's treated as a sport? There is no scoreboard. Yes, granted, there has to be a standard that reveals certain things, like with a school audition. But beyond that you're in the realm of esthetic. Everything else is a descriptive language. If you want razzle-dazzle...if you want to beat somebody up, be a boxer. All this time I thought drumming was art.

Session Work

MD: You've played thousands of sessions. Are there certain parameters you rely on to have a successful recording session?

Vinnie: Sure. There are expectations and there are projections. If I expect a good headphone mix, I feel that's not too much to ask for. We're on a professional level here. It's about quality. It helps if the preproduction is good, and if the room is not so bad that it's almost like being in an anechoic chamber. And then you have the psychological makeup of the producer and the artist involved to consider.

MD: I was really struck with your interpretation of Steely Dan's "Aja" on the Jeff Richman record, *The Royal Dan*. How did you approach reinterpreting Steve Gadd's classic solo in "Aja"?

Vinnie: Personally, I would rather have not done it. Steve made such a great musical statement. The solo segments we did were longer, so I approached it the way that I did. You can't approach it like Steve because that's not being yourself. What are you going to do: chops-out? Don't fall into that trap of "Watch this."

I played what I did because it occurred to me to paint a different picture. Even thinking you can do it better or not is counterproductive. Why would you repaint the Mona Lisa? The Sistine Chapel is what it is. Guys didn't create sculpture back then with an idea like, "I dunno, man, that arm is a little high." And this line of thinking *really* applies to modern-day "production" as well. Imagine an A&R man or producer standing behind Pablo Picasso: "Pablo, babe, think of your demographic. Think of your peeps, babe. Are they really going to buy this, man?" That happens today, all the time.

MD: On *Visions Of An Inner Mounting Apocalypse*, you interpret an entire album's worth of Billy Cobham's patterns with the Mahavishnu Orchestra. On some tracks you allude to Billy's trademark grooves, while elsewhere you make them more personal.

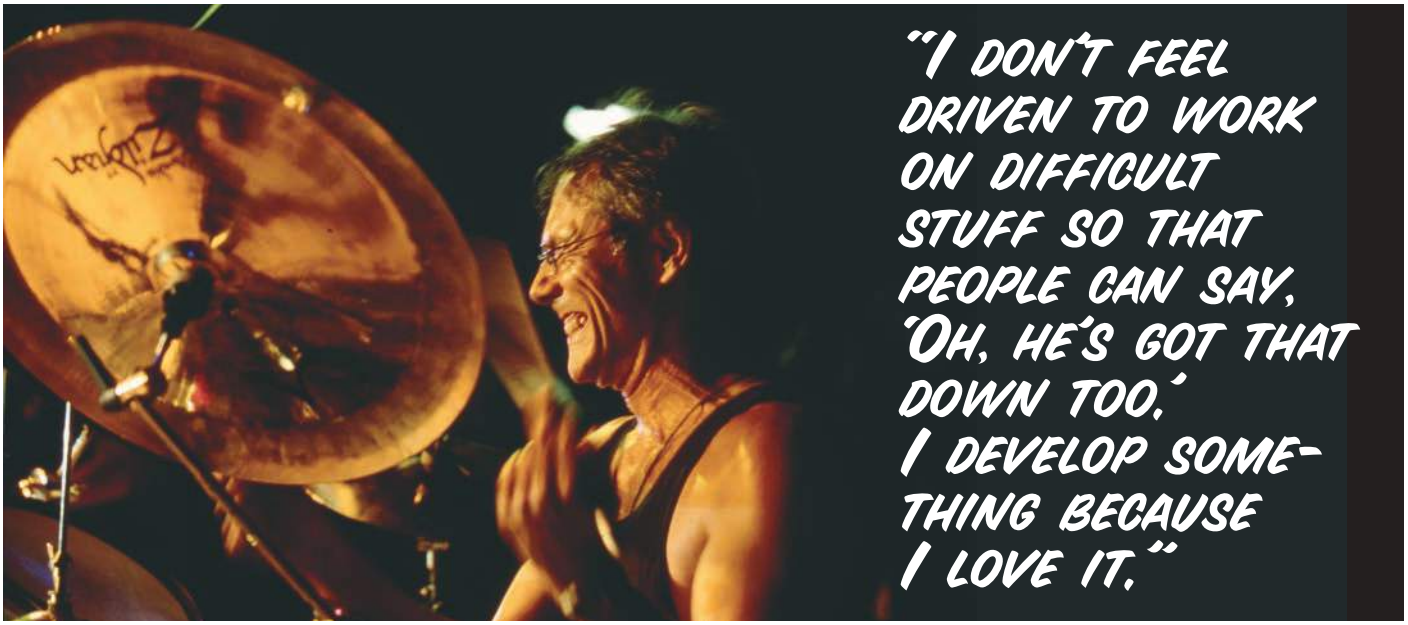
Vinnie: Billy was such a huge influence on us all. I wasn't thinking about not playing Billy grooves, it just came out automatically. What he did for the songs is so right, and to me such an integral part of the compositions; and unless you're going to reinterpret the song completely differently.... For me it was a tip of the hat. I thought that's the way it should be because of what Billy did.

I applaud Jeff Richman for doing all those records. They were no small task. But in retrospect I wish I didn't have to go in there and read it. We did that record in a day with charts. We were reading Mahavishnu! Those guys were a *band*. They played that music all the time. When you cut that many songs in a day, I'm not going to be able to memorize all of those arrangements. I don't have that kind of instant memory muscle. I just wish I'd had a little more time with it because I love that music and I love playing it.

MD: There is a great video of you on YouTube.com playing "Scatterbrained" live with Jeff Beck. It's about three times faster than the original. You also play tremendously improvisational, fast, aggressive drumming on recent records with Frank Macchia, Randy Waldman, Scott Kinsey, and Brian Bromberg. How do you approach that style of drumming differently now than when you were playing with Allan Holdsworth or Frank Zappa?

Vinnie: That's a really difficult question. With Zappa, that event occurred like being thrust into the eye of a hurricane. You can't understand the whirlwind when you're in it. It was a turning point when Frank discovered I could do certain things and prompted me to do them. It was kind of new, versus having played different kinds of music for years and then entering every situation with an open mindset.

By the time I had done *Secrets* with Allan, that mindset was already well developed for me. I didn't think like, This is hard music and I'm playing fast and



complicated and, Oh boy, I can't wait to shine, or, Gee, this is fulfilling and everything else I've been doing isn't. Again, that, to me, is black-and-white thinking. I don't know how much different it really was. I just don't think that way anymore.

The Hot Drummer List

MD: Does anything present a level of difficulty for you at this point?

Vinnie: Whenever you try to do something you're not familiar with, it presents, or *can* present, a level of difficulty. But you have to look at it in a healthy way. Am I afraid of it? Will it trigger a mental block in me that's going to inhibit me? Do I need to do it? Do I want to do it? I haven't thought in those terms in quite a while. I usually find a way around it to integrate it, or maybe I'll develop it for a while, or maybe I'll just jump in.

Since I've developed a certain degree of independence, if I wanted to develop another kind of independence and showcase that in my playing, I have the innate talent to do it. Lately everyone is doing the clave with the left foot. I don't sit down

DAVE WECKL AND VINNIE COLAUITA

Funny how time repeats itself. Buddy Rich and Louis Bellson from 1974)

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and spend time practicing that. Look, I'm not going to do it just because it's the hot thing to do. Even if it were a necessity, I would have to make a decision whether it would be forced or it would be another thing I would want to do. It's not a question of difficulty.

I've spent a lot of time working up stuff that was difficult, and I didn't wonder if I was going to be able to integrate it into my playing. This is the same thing. I just don't feel driven to spend time with that so that people can say, "Oh, he's got that down too." There are things I'm not going to do just to be on the hot drummer list, unless I'm driven to do it. Did Segovia worry about whether or not he could play like Hendrix? Why does a drummer have to compete that way? I don't cross off a checklist of styles. I just go where my heart is. My desire drives me to increase my standard of whatever I'm doing—or not do it because I feel forced to do it. I develop something because I love it.

Tuning, Setup, Warm-ups

MD: How do you typically tune for different sessions? How does Faith Hill differ from Pussycat Dolls or Scott Kinsey?

Vinnie: I generally have a pretty generic tuning, and I use that as a base and modify from that. I use 10", 12", 14", and 16" toms, an 18x22 kick, and the snare du jour, or more precisely, the snare du track. If I'm in a live situation, I want a drum that has playability, a certain amount of crack, tune-ability, and range, which is usually a five-inch drum. Metal or wood? Depends on the room.

With Faith Hill, my tuning is adaptable. I have to look at the drums that I'm using. Certain drums sound thuddier than others. I'm not going for high-pitched toms with Faith Hill. I want the toms to have some meat. With Scott Kinsey, I had a lot of crack on the snare because it seemed right. Whatever enables me to speak is what I go for. A low snare wouldn't work with Scott, not on that track. I make logical choices based on the esthetic of what I'm doing. What kind of drums, cymbals, and sounds will reinforce that esthetic?

MD: Do you have favorite snare drums for studio work?

Vinnie: I have two Longo snares that sound great, some Bradys that sound great, and several Gretsch snare drums that also sound great. I also have two hybrid snare drums from Drum Paradise, and several chrome-over-brass Ludwig Supraphonic 400s. I know what each drum does when I go into a session. I listen to the characteristics of the drums and go from there. You get to a point where you know a drum well and how a certain room will affect its sound.

MD: You used to sit much lower. What happened?

Vinnie: My back started hurting. At one gig I couldn't even stand up straight because the pain was shooting up my back. It got to the point where I felt that my back and posture weren't doing me any good. I wanted to sit higher and rebalance myself on the set. It feels pretty good now.

I'll tweak an unfamiliar kit. It's easy to get used to one kit at every session. Vary your seat height by a few inches and it can affect your balance on the kit. It does mine. I like to feel balanced. My knee is mostly parallel to my hip.

MD: Do you warm up before a gig, or do you prefer to play the set fresh without a warm-up?

Vinnie: Lately, with Herbie, we do soundchecks and we play for a long time. I'll just play around the kit during soundcheck and then play by myself a little bit. By the time soundcheck is over, we don't have much time before the gig, so I'll gather my thoughts for fifteen minutes and then change clothes. Then I'll twist the sticks around in my hands a little, shake my limbs, and maybe do ten minutes of warm-ups. Then we hit it.

If I don't have that long of a soundcheck, I like to work on a pad or the arm of a chair for ten minutes. It used to be that I would do it for thirty minutes, but it really depends on how long the soundcheck is. I might do various strokes and then just hit the gig. It's nice to walk out on stage and boom!

A lot of it is pacing. Don't blow your chops out in the first tune. I have to go through that psychological thing too. If the drums sound like they're getting blown away by the wind and I'm not hearing the tom-toms, I have to trust that they're being heard out in the house rather than hit them harder. That will either choke the drum or make you stiff. You have to pace yourself and relax into it.

MD: Why did you switch to Gretsch drums?

Vinnie: I was always a closet Gretsch freak. I love the sound of Gretsch drums. While they have a very resonant pure sound, they also have a *particular* sound that I like. I like that I can tune them differently to produce more or less overtones and the sort of fundamental sound I was hearing from the tom-toms.

At a certain point in my life I thought, "This is my voice." Why not be true to that and just play what I want to play? If I died tomorrow, I would have wanted to play my Gretsch drums and let it be known that I express myself on these drums that I consider to be my voice.

It's easy to say that I was influenced by my heroes that played Gretsch, specifically Tony Williams, *my* hero. That was his voice. But you don't see me putting black dot heads on the drums and playing a 24" bass drum. A lot of people besides me heard Gretsch drums on a lot of jazz recordings. I became aware of them on studio sessions in LA with specific people having played them. Cartage companies were sending them out on sessions because they knew that Gretsch were the real deal. I noticed how they sounded in various kinds of contemporary and pop settings outside of jazz that expanded my awareness of how they sounded and how adaptable they are.

MD: Are you playing Gretsch on every record you cut?

Vinnie: Oh, yeah. I'll go to great lengths to get Gretsch drums wherever I am. Drum Paradise has Gretsch in Nashville, as does Artie Smith in New York. I have Gretsch drums in Tokyo, as well as a kit in Europe. I'm using all Gretsch with Herbie, the New Classic Maple with the tube lugs. They sound different from the classic USA Maple. They're the first new Gretsch drum design in many years and they sound great. Recently on tour with Jeff Beck I used my own Signature series, and I'll use those in Japan with Herbie.

Speaking of Herbie, he and I did a session together in October with Quincy Jones; that's when he called me about doing this tour. We're doing a cross section of tunes from his repertoire, including "Actual Proof" and "Maiden Voyage."

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Vinnie Colaiuta

Vinnie Part II?

MD: How are things progressing with your next solo album?

Vinnie: There isn't progress because I haven't had time to write anything. I've been really busy this past year, so the record will happen when it's ready to happen. Hopefully there will be inspiration so it will be born. If I get time to write again, where I feel like I have something to say, so be it. I've been so busy working all the time, life starts to become a blur after a while. When I go home after a session, I have to shut my mind off and go to sleep, and then get up and do it all again the next day.

Speaking of that, people judge you by whether or not you're constantly in the studio. If you're not, you're somehow diminished in their eyes. That's another social stigma I find to be preposterous. I basically *do* live in the studio.

MD: Everyone takes shots at the guy on top.

Vinnie: Or else they get in your face and start talking to you. And as soon as you ask them, "So how are you?" the first thing that comes out of their mouth is, "Busy!" As if I'll hold them in esteem because they are busy. I just do what I do. If people like me, they like me.

MD: Do you have any particular musical ambitions left?

Vinnie: I do, but now is not the time to go into them. I can't elaborate on that.

This Thing Of Ours

MD: Beyond skill and talent, what are the keys to being a success in the music business?

Vinnie: Other than skill and talent and the personality to maneuver through all of that, the rest of it is a blessing and you have to do it all to glorify God. If I say this to people, they'll interpret it in a religious, dogmatic way. But I am talking spiritually. I'm not trying to represent myself as some bastion of spiritual goodness. It takes a level of humility and recognition of what your source is and *who* your source is. You have to recognize where the source came from and be grateful for it. That then filters down into the personality needed to maneuver in the music business. Just being genuine and true to yourself—those are all things that are immutable. Getting along

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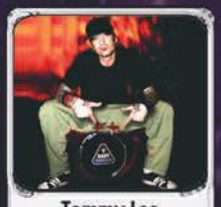
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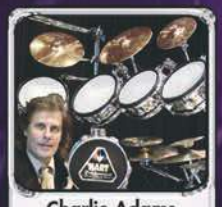
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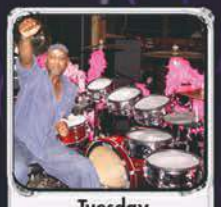
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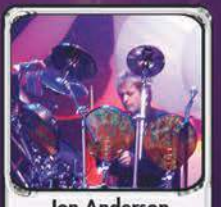
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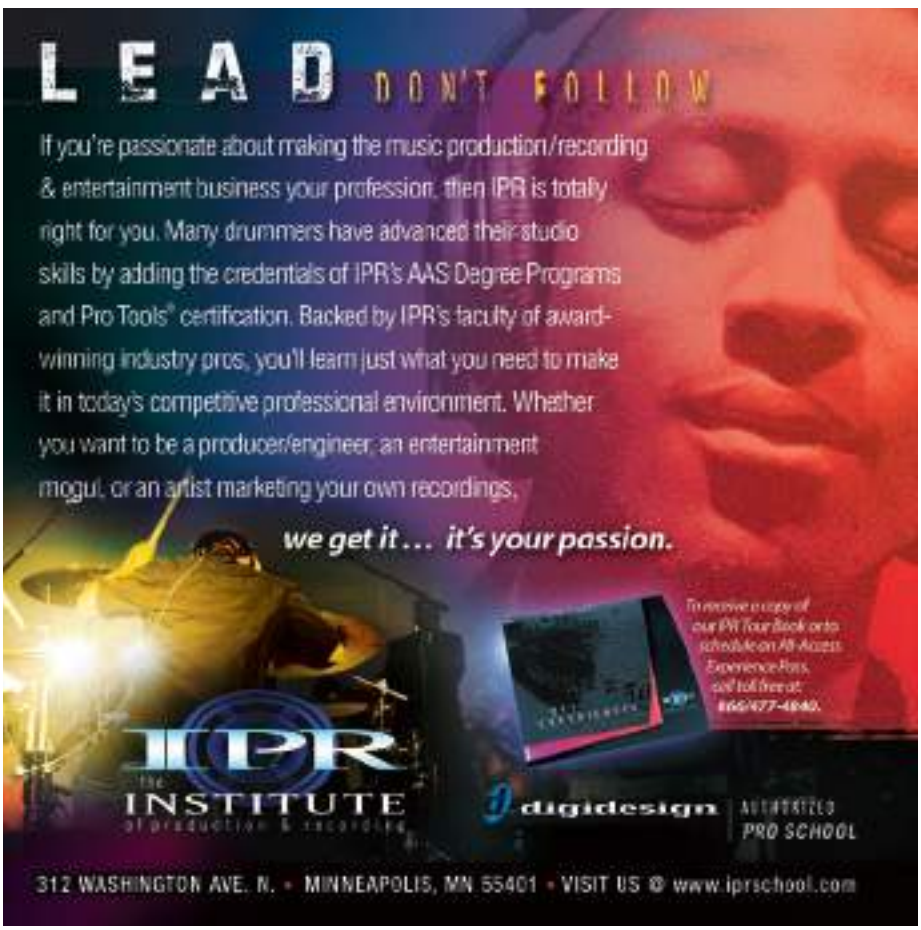

with people and being as true as you can be to the music and to yourself is what it's about.

I avoid using certain words that will conjure up any kind of association of inferior versus superior. That's why when I say "be the best you can be" I don't use any connotation of what the word "best" means because I don't want to suggest the idea of competition or some high skill level you have to achieve to be some gargantuan Olympian sports type. But if you can find another way to conceptualize that, you'll understand what I'm thinking or trying to say.

MD: You've fielded these technical/chops matters for *so* long, and your position is unique. Not many drummers have reached your level of technique *and* artistry on the set, which is part of the evolutionary chain of the drumset. For those who don't have that skill level, what you do is almost beyond comprehension. And only people like you, Tony Williams, Steve Gadd, and drummers of that ilk know what it's like to be in that catbird seat.

Vinnie: I'm sure there is some commonality in our view due to having arrived at a certain level, so to speak, and of having shared the experience of going through these processes. Yet at the same time we have a unique way of expressing it. We are different. But that's a lofty and humbling thing, associating me with part of the evolution of the instrument and the skills required.

But again, only talking about the skill necessary to enable that to happen is reductionistic. There are a lot of guys out there with skills who have not contributed to the evolution of the instrument. It's about more than that, or about aspects and phenomena other than just skill.

When you look at Elvin Jones at the time of his emergence, he took the instrument in another direction because of his approach and what he was saying. So what are you saying? It's an emotive language. It's an aesthetic. Skill is an aspect, but it's what you do with that skill, what you're saying with that skill, that matters.

But it's humbling to be held in that kind of esteem with my heroes. Believe me, I am very appreciative of all of that, and I don't take it for granted.

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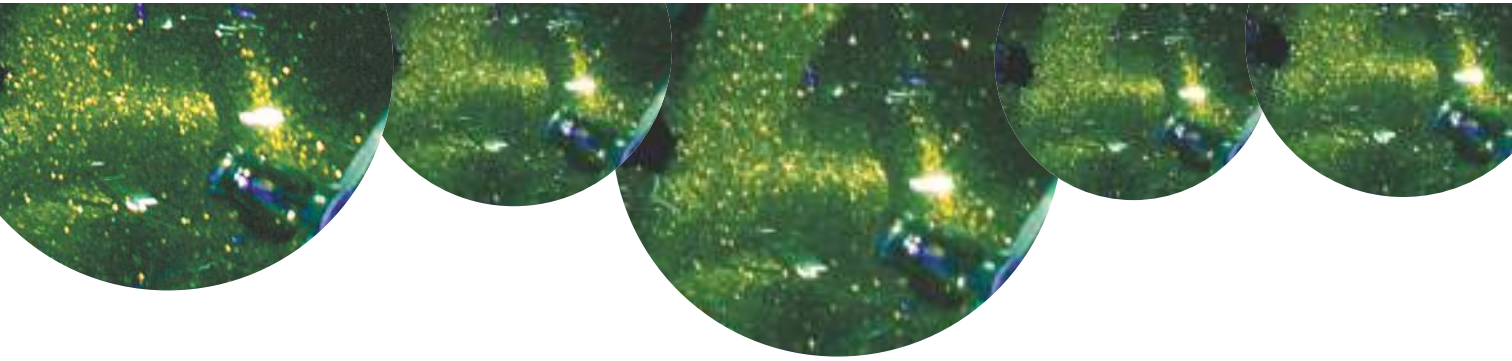


Abe Cunningham

Deftones'

Crucial Tales Of The Carbo Kid

Deftones' new record, *Saturday Night Wrist*, is widely considered to be their finest. And it *should* be. The band—drummer Abe Cunningham in particular—says it was their most challenging experience by far.

It's been said that the clothes make the man, and the producer makes the band. Where would The Beatles be without George Martin, or The Red Hot Chili Peppers without Rick Rubin, or any number of great American bands without the genius touch of Tom Dowd? Well, the whole producer/band equation was put to the test on Deftones' most recent album, *Saturday Night Wrist*.

A major leap forward for the band sonically and instrumentally, *Saturday Night Wrist* exposes the full glorious assault of drummer Abe Cunningham, a player for whom mixing and matching styles has become something of a trademark. Abe and his Deftones bandmates may be known for a Grammy-winning, personalized brand of experimental rock, but Abe's drumming has always been open to more enigmatic expression and left-of-center impressions.

Drawing on a love of Stewart Copeland and the "hippie rock" of his Mendocino County (California) childhood, Cunningham added mad funk flavors and progressive rhythms to Deftones' collision of sprawling metal mania and plunderphonics. But that all came to a screeching halt on *Saturday Night Wrist.* Under the direction of producer Bob Ezrin, a single-minded production whiz with the track record to back it up, Cunningham found the antithesis of a soul mate.

"I felt like my creativity was being castrated," Abe admitted backstage at a gig in California. "But at the same time, Bob had a broader vision of the entire record. We needed a kick in the ass, and he certainly gave it to us." Ezrin, who has produced seminal records for Alice Cooper, Lou Reed, Peter Gabriel, and KISS, among others, turned the mild-mannered Abe into a nail-biting basket case. After repeatedly being told to "stop playing jazz," Abe developed his own strategy for tracking sessions and getting sounds—when Ezrin was nowhere in sight. Intriguingly, the thirty-three-year-old drummer has never sounded better.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Alex Solca

TAMA

Named for the paralysis that occurs when someone falls asleep on a limb, thus cutting off the blood flow and requiring immediate medical attention, *Saturday Night Wrist* is everything that fans of the Sacramento-based band have come to expect—and more. The album was recorded at four different studios, including a rented house in Malibu where the then warring bandmembers had retreated in an attempt to "become friends again." Early sessions also transpired at The Spot in Sacramento and in various LA rooms, culminating in the terror that finally took place at Ezrin's Connecticut-based Carriage House studios.

Saturday Night Wrist represents the latest evolution of a band that never quite matched the nu-metal apeheads with whom they were typically lumped together. Prominently featuring Chino Moreno's power-packed vocals and plaintive poetry, Stephen Carpenter's howling guitar sonics, and Abe's unpredictable rhythms, the group more closely resembled a caravan of spirituality-seeking sherpas climbing Mount Everest than a crew of longhairs partying in the desert. Spouting tales of Roman mythology cloaked in psychedelic sonics and rhythms flexibly scraping the sky, Deftones are impossible to pin down, much less successfully label. And like all great bands, they often come to loggerheads, blow up like a volcano, and then make up, all within the music.

Abe Cunningham's nearly frenetic speech patterns seem to reflect his band's internal tensions, his rapid-fire answers and dot-dashing mind a mirror of his spirited drumming.

Abe's Kit

Drums: Tama Starclassic Bubinga in Egyptian Night Mist finish

- **A.** 8x14 Bubinga snare
- **B.** 6½x14 bell brass snare
- **C.** 8" Octoban
- **D.** 6x8 tom
- **E.** 9x12 tom
- **F.** 16x16 floor tom
- **G.** 16x18 floor tom
- **H.** 16x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

1. 15" hi-hats (K top, K Mastersound bottom)
2. 19" Z crash-ride
3. 10" A splash
4. 20" A Custom Projection crash
5. 10" A splash
6. 24" A medium ride
7. 20" A medium-thin crash
8. 20" Oriental China Trash

Hardware: Tama, including an Iron Cobra Power Glide double pedal

Heads: Remo coated Emperors on snare batters, Ambassador snare-sides, clear Ambassadors on tops and bottoms of toms, PowerStroke 4 on bass drum batter with an Ambassador (with custom art) on front

Sticks: Pro-Mark Abe Cunningham Signature model

Electronics: Roland V-Drums

MD: On previous Deftones albums, you typically played funk patterns. But on *Saturday Night Wrist,* your drumming is much broader in scope. It's a real reinvention.

Abe: It's more simplified. A lot of it has to do with changing producers from Terry Date to Bob Ezrin. This whole record was absolutely insane to make. It took three years to complete. Part of that was due to Ezrin. I have always played parts off the top of my head, even when recording. When setting something in stone, our band has always worked in the moment. Bob made me concentrate on having set parts and even playing the same part twice. It totally makes sense, though working that way was very difficult at the time.

I find the studio to be a very personal thing. In our band, tempers can fly, and there can also be joy. But when you're not comfortable with someone, it can be a bit strained. We knew Terry very well, but Bob was a totally new person in our midst. It was a strange pairing. It was very frustrating, but it was great. Bob has a way of working with drummers, and I was driven insane.

MD: Can you give an example of where Ezrin gave you trouble?

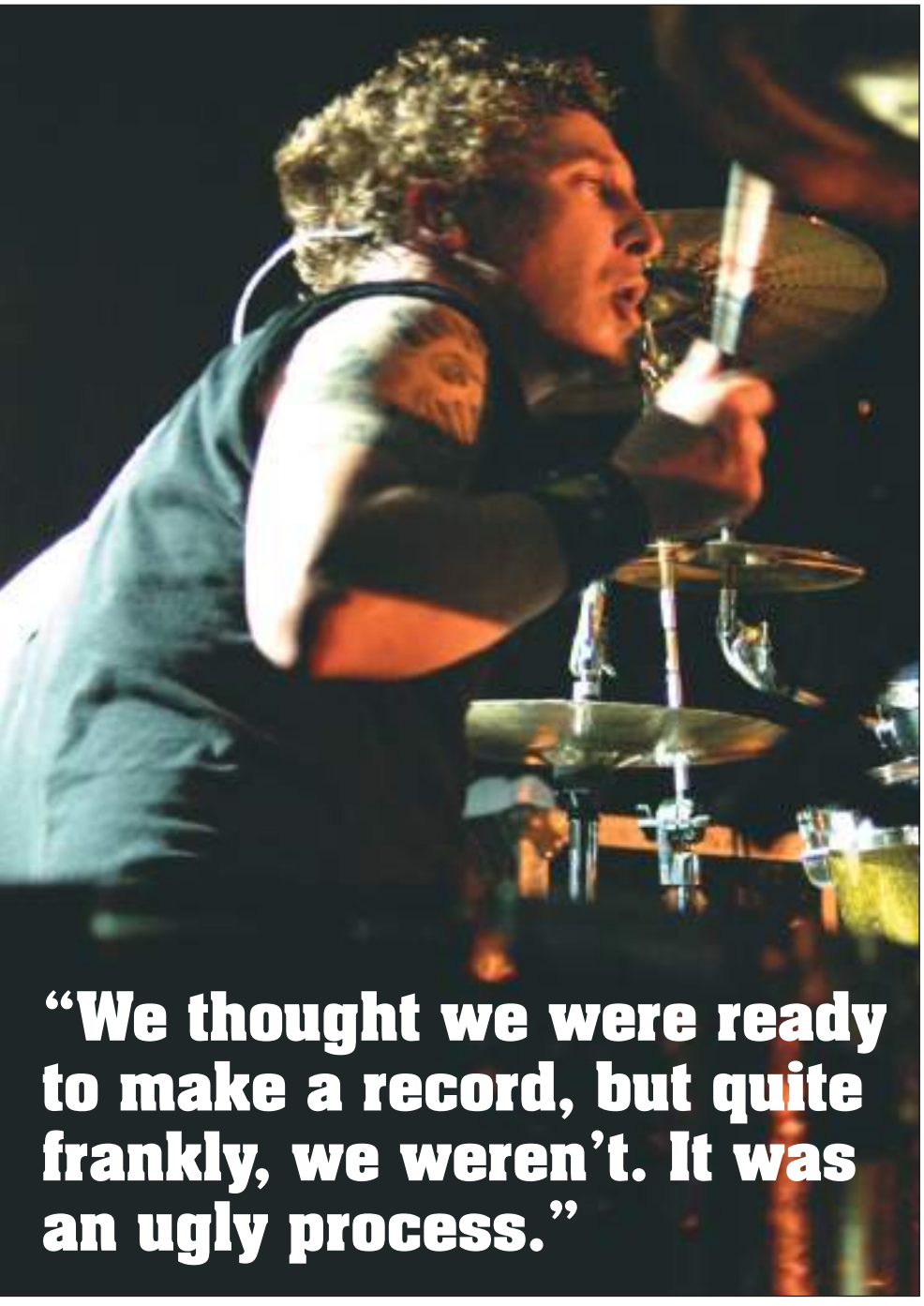
Abe: Oh, on everything—every single track. I'm not saying this to bad-rap him at all. He was great, and we're really stoked about the record. And honestly, I learned so many things. He taught me to look at things differently. He was behind so many huge-selling records. But it goes back to comfort level, and we were trying to get to know each other while the band was knee-deep in the most personal thing we could imagine. The guys in the band are best friends. Actually, we're beyond that, we're brothers. We have been together for eighteen years now. We thought we were ready to make a record, but quite frankly, we weren't. We had a crazy time with Bob, but it was also amazing. It got hectic. And we had so much time with these songs to nit-

pick. It was an ugly process.

MD: But it's a major progression for the band, and you still play so many unique fills, from small splashes to unexpected rhythms. And it's all very dynamic. How did Bob specifically direct you as a drummer?

Abe: He drove me away! He's used to working with people who are very organized, and, once again, our band was far from ready to make a record. It came to a point where I would try to get to the studio early to do my tracks before Bob got there. I worked with the engineer and we could bust things out quick.

One day I was laying down some tracks when Bob walked in, and I saw him in the control room behind the glass and totally tensed up and stopped playing. The next thing I hear is Bob saying, "Abe, you really don't like me to be here when you're doing your tracks, do you?" I said, "No, Bob. I don't at all." Again, I don't mean to bad-rap him, because he brought so much out of us. But it was a pairing that took a little getting used to.



"We thought we were ready to make a record, but quite frankly, we weren't. It was an ugly process."

MD: *Saturday Night Wrist* is proof of that process. In past recording sessions, you never repeated the same part twice?

Abe: There are a lot of things that are off the cuff on the new record, but Bob wanted me to focus on consistency. He would stop us in the middle of a track and say, "That's jazz, Abe. This is rock." I would say, "Fine, Bob." I felt like my creativity was being castrated at that point. But at the same time he had a broader vision of the entire record. And I respect that. But it's very difficult to have someone stop you in the middle of a track when you're trying to work it out. We hired him to do just what he did, though. We needed a kick in the ass, and he certainly gave it to us.

MD: I understand that Chino disappeared briefly during the sessions and didn't contribute anything for a while.

Abe: It was strange. He was off with his side project, Team Sleep, and it turned into a jealous high school kind of thing. It got crazy, when the music was almost done for our album and he decided he wanted to go on tour with Team Sleep. But our problems are nothing different from those of any other band. There were also a couple of divorces among bandmembers during the time of the recording, and I'm going through one now. My kids are the only thing on my mind.

MD: You have a great record to show for all the pain. Speaking of that, your drumming always seems to go against the grain of the style of music Deftones play, meaning you're not a metal drummer per se. You play more funk and Stewart Copeland–style ideas.

Abe: Well, my dad played bass and my stepdad played drums, so I grew up in a musical family, in Mendocino, near the coast. We moved to Sacramento when I was twelve. My earliest memories are all about being at my dad's gigs—crawling under the drums and knocking over cymbal stands.

I learned to play when I was seven. By nine I caught the drum bug. I took everything apart, and I fell in love with the drums. I learned to play with records, and Deftones was my first band. We were your normal garage band. I took lessons for a few months when I was fourteen. And then in high school I joined the marching band, and later the jazz band, which exposed me to *so* much. We even entered a few compe-

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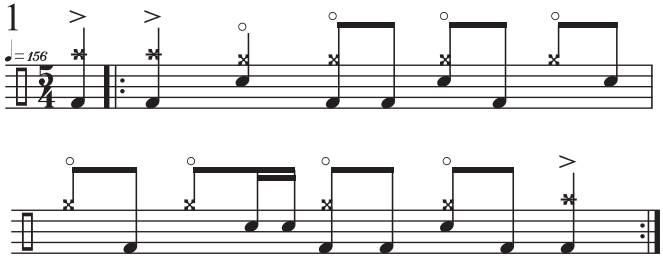
A Taste Of Abe

Transcribed by Mike Dawson

Here are a few choice moments on *Saturday Night Wrist* that demonstrate how Abe Cunningham's simple and organic drumming is a perfect match for Deftones' unique brand of dark and atmospheric metal.

"Rapture"

This track is classic Deftones—thick guitars, shrieking vocals, and hard-hitting grooves. Here's Abe's syncopated pattern that weaves through the guitars during the odd-timed verse section. (0:39)

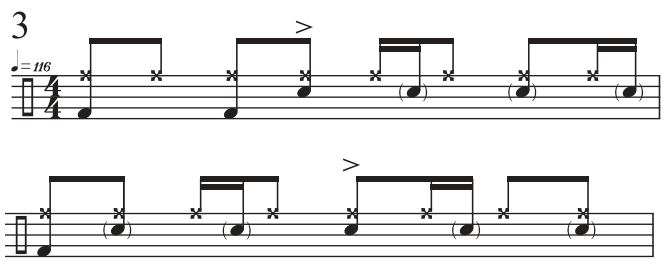


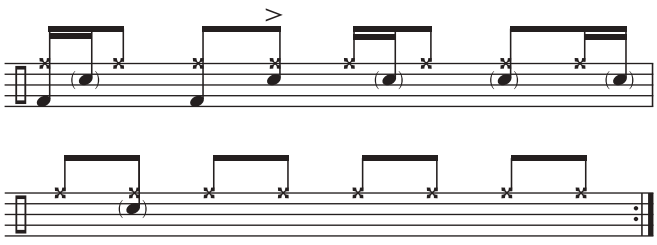
"Cherry Waves"

During the middle section of this song, Abe exchanges riffs with the guitars before building up to the chorus. (3:00)

"U, U, D, D, L, R, L, R, A, B, Select, Start"

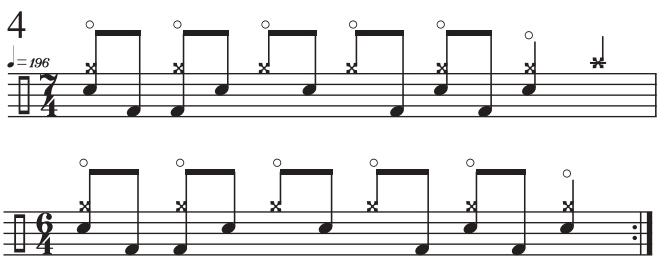
On this spacey track, Abe throws some delay on his snare drum to create a hypnotic groove that bounces around the beat. (0:05)





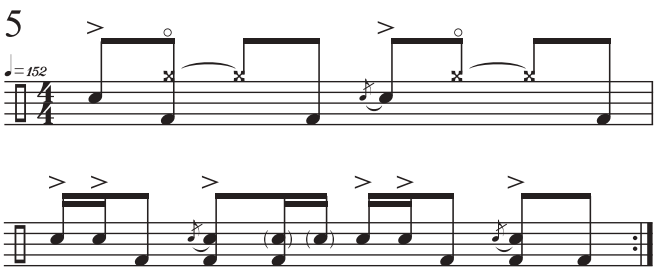
"Rats!Rats!Rats!"

Here's a stripped-down odd-timed groove where Abe follows the guitar's syncopated line with his kick and snare, while anchoring the feel with driving quarter notes on the hi-hat. (0:11)



"Combat"

Abe sets up the middle section of this track with an unusual two-bar pattern between his kick, snare, and open hi-hat. (1:20)



To hear some of these transcriptions, log on to www.moderndrummer.com.

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titions. I also learned the rudiments in marching band. Going to band competitions and being judged was the greatest thing for my drumming.

Deftonic Evolution

MD: How has your drumming evolved since Deftones' debut, *Adrenaline*?

Abe: I've only been able to listen to that first record recently. It's a very excited, young, nervous band on there, my drumming especially. Everything was brand-new; we were in a real studio with a real producer. But we were very young.

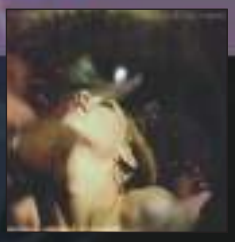
When our second record, *Around The Fur*, came out, we had been touring consistently for the previous two years, so we knew a little more. It was such an exciting time. I was way more at ease in the studio, and my drumming felt more comfortable. We came from the '80s, and our name was reminiscent of that time. "Def" was the word. The whole direction of our band was about not having boundaries. For me, I loved funk and metal, and I found these things out on my own. I always thought of myself as a funk-rock drummer.

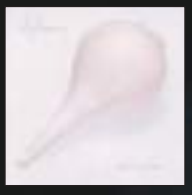
MD: Have you tried to incorporate differ-

Def Tracks

Recordings

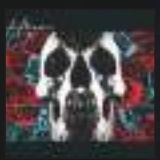
Artist	Album
Deftones	Saturday Night Wrist
Deftones	Adrenaline
Deftones	Around The Fur
Deftones	White Pony
Deftones	Deftones
Deftones	B-Sides & Rarities





Favorites

Artist	Album	Drummer
The Byrds	Untitled	Gene Parsons
The Byrds	Sweetheart Of The Rodeo	Gene Parsons
The Clash	Sandinista!	Topper Headon
Jimi Hendrix	Smash Hits	Mitch Mitchell
Metallica	...And Justice For All	Lars Ulrich
Pink Floyd	The Dark Side Of The Moon	Nick Mason
The Police	Zenyatta Mondatta	Stewart Copeland
Primus	Suck On This	Tim Alexander
Rush	Moving Pictures	Neil Peart
Stevie Wonder	Songs In The Key Of Life	Raymond Pounds, Stevie Wonder



ABE CUNNINGHAM
Deftones
Abe Cunningham Autograph Model
American Hickory, TX916, Wood-tip

CHRIS ADLER
Lamb of God
Chris Adler Autograph Model
American Hickory, TX5AX, Wood-tip

RAY LUZIER
Army of Anyone
American Hickory,
TX5B, Wood-tip

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ent approaches from album to album?

Abe: I've always tried to bring something new. And as a band, while we didn't know it all, we knew quite a bit from being together for so many years, touring and experiencing different cultures.

MD: Before Ezrin came on board, what changes were you going through as a drummer, if any?

Abe: At the end of the last tour, we were totally fried. So we took some time off. That allowed me to fall in love with the drums all over again. I became that seven-year-old kid who removes all the lugs and packs them with cotton balls so the springs don't rattle. I did that with my first Ludwig kit. But before that, I had gotten to the point where drumming had become a job. We were touring so much, and it had become a grind. The whole band was burnt. That's another reason this album took so long to make.

MD: You found new inspiration, but did you take on a new practice regimen as well?

Abe: We have a studio that I can use at any time. I'm trying to get back to a regular practice routine. I was really happy being a dad and enjoying my two boys, but I am madly in love with the drums, too. I'm getting back into woodshedding. After a while you get good at being in a band, and that's about it. But there was another part of me that was just dying.

MD: So what do you work on when you have the chance?

Abe: I just go in and play. I've been enjoying recording myself and experimenting. I pop things into GarageBand, which is a wonderful tool. I play around with beats. And I play along with records, getting into that whole joy of emulating and playing the music that made me happy when I was a little boy, just playing and being on fire.

Clash Of The Titans

MD: You spoke earlier about clashing with Bob Ezrin and his insistence that you play each part with some consistency. How does a drummer cope in that situation?

Abe: It's all about give and take. It was so incredibly frustrating, but when you're knee-deep in it you don't realize or imagine how well it will turn out. When I look back, it wasn't that big of a deal. Maybe I was making more out of it than what it was. I went in wanting nothing more than to please Bob. He's made some great records. It was very difficult, because he beat the shit out of me. It was really crazy. I can laugh at it now. It was nothing like I thought it would be. And though I make it sound like a horrendous experience, it wasn't. I just didn't expect it.

MD: What was the essence of his direction that drove you nuts?

Abe: My problem was with Bob stopping us, or me, before I even had a chance to blossom or get comfortable. We were getting whistled at by this man and told to stop, or "It's wrong." We hired him, but it got pretty silly. With Terry Date, he was more of an engineer, a master knob twiddler. This was the first time we had somebody come into the songs with us.

MD: Did Ezrin tell you to play more simply?
Abe: Yeah. And that's fine, but he told me to not do things that were just in me. "Hey, man," I thought, "I dig your perspective, but at the same time I'm *me*." It wasn't an ego thing; I just didn't like being told I couldn't play something that I really felt strongly about.

Tones & Tracks

MD: The drum production on *Saturday Night Wrist* is much bigger and more intense than on previous Deftones albums. On earlier records it often just sounded like you were playing in a room, simply miked. But I always liked your snare drum sound. It sounded like it was all head and rimshot. How did you get that sound?
Abe: That was the influence of Mr. Stewart Copeland. That's been another battle, too, trying to find one snare drum that works on everything. We can switch them up, of course, but mostly I would just crank them up, very tight. That was part of Terry's thing. He was responsible for getting the sound. This new record is so much more airy. We did more overdubbing, and I even used a big concert bass drum in parts where I hit it with a mallet over my existing track. You can tell there's a difference.
MD: But in the way you strike the snare drum, do you always go for a rimshot, do you place the stick dead center, or do you back off and strike it closer to the outer edge of the drum?
Abe: It's pretty much dead center, but I always try to get some rim in there, just to give it that extra crank. And I've found a balance between the studio and live when it comes to tuning. The second snare drum is tuned way low, almost disgustingly low. You can hear it on the song "Beware" from the new record. It's that beautiful "Eagles" sound, tuned low and big, like a piece of poop.
MD: Can you reveal the tuning for the rest of the set?
Abe: The toms are tuned open with no muffling, a little bit tighter on the bottom. I like them to ring. Studio to live is pretty much the same. The bass drum is a little tighter on the front. I have a nice pillow in there. I was using 20" kicks for a long time. They record beautifully, and live they can sound really thunderous. But on the new record I used a 22" and a 24".
MD: Do you sit high or low?
Abe: We're back on the road again, and my muscles are loose. So I'm making adjustments and spreading things out more. But I sit pretty much level with the snare, with my legs at a 90° angle.
MD: You mentioned Stewart Copeland being one of your big influences. So are you an animal pounder like he is, or are you more subtle in your motion?
Abe: I'm more of an animal, but as age sets in you figure out what works best. You can only hit a drum so hard. Live, I let the mics do the work. In the studio, I let the room do the work.

Making The Mix

MD: Did you record live with the band, or to a bass or guitar track?
Abe: Generally the band records together. On all the previous records, maybe two songs were recorded with the click. This time we did almost everything to a click.
MD: Was that a new challenge?
Abe: It was great, actually. You've read it a million times in *Modern Drummer*, that if you're not comfortable with a click it can be your enemy. But once I realized that it's a shoulder you can lean on, I had a blast with it, and it became a great friend. I think you can tell on the record. It's something a little different, the music is cohesive and better put together time-wise. But we're also a human band, and there should be room for human ebb and flow.
MD: Are you the kind of drummer who likes to attend mixdown sessions to approve the final product?
Abe: Yeah, I used to always be in there—way too much. Now I let the guy who is doing it get his bearings and then come in. I've learned to relax. It's a trust issue.
MD: But it must be hard to trust bandmembers during the recording process when everyone seems to hate each other.
Abe: I wouldn't say "hate," but there was some serious friction. Part of it was due to being burnt and fried, and our communication at that point had become nonexistent. That's no place to be when you're trying to communicate in music.
MD: How did you develop the rim pattern in "Rapture"?
Abe: I have to give that up to Brendan Canty of Fugazi. He's an amazing drummer, and that's one of his signatures. That's just what the song needed in that verse, a

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Stephen Perkins
Autograph Model

Stephen's model is made of the original Japanese Shira Kashi White Oak. It is 16 1/4" (412mm) long and .531" (13.5mm) in diameter with a round wood tip. For more information, visit promark.com.

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simple thing to take it totally elsewhere without having to be mashing on the hats or even playing a tight hat.

MD: Your drumming personality is more slamming in general on this album. Did Ezrin ask you to play harder or with more passion on some tracks?

Abe: As I mentioned, a lot of it was done with the engineer, when Bob wasn't there. Bob would come in every day around 3:00, so I would get in around noon and bust out as much as I could so I could play the songs the way I wanted to. I wanted to get my point across without having to deal with him right on the spot. Bob would come in and have his opinion, and we could change things or not. But at least I was able to get what I wanted in the song.

MD: There's a real diversity of approach on the album. What are you playing in "Cherry Waves," which is sort of a march-derived pattern?

Abe: That intro beat, which is also part of the verse, is sort of a laid-back buzz roll pattern, which I recorded in Malibu. The cranked-up snare on 2 and 4 was also recorded in Malibu, but taken from another track. We superimposed that on top of "Cherry Waves." Then when we got to Connecticut, I overdubbed a concert bass drum underneath.

MD: "Mein" resembles a fusion beat with flam fills. What was your impetus for the drum part?

Abe: I was slamming when we first did that. Bob wanted to change the flams. There were actually more of them in the part when we began. It was one of those songs that came along when we were jamming. It's uptempo, a subtle change to kick up the album a few notches.

MD: But you're playing some flams in there.

Abe: Yeah, I had to sneak them in. They were telling me to play something else, but I was like, "*Look*," so I stuck a few back in.

MD: "Rats!Rats!Rats!" is beautiful, from the powerful unison stickings to the open ride section and what sounds like odd-time sections.

Abe: That began with Stephen and I coming up with the parts. He and I usually get the basic skeleton of the songs together. That tune was long at first. We cut it down. It has a lot of tempo changes, so we created a tempo map. There are five sections. We spent forever working on the tune to make it feel right.

MD: So you wrote out a chart?

Abe: No, we made the tempo map in Pro Tools, so we could record the song to a click and have the tempo change. One section might be 110 bpm, then the next section might be 122. It's subtle. It became tedious to actually track it with all the small changes in tempo, but it turned out cool. Once we made the map we knew where to lay back and where to kick it in a bit more.

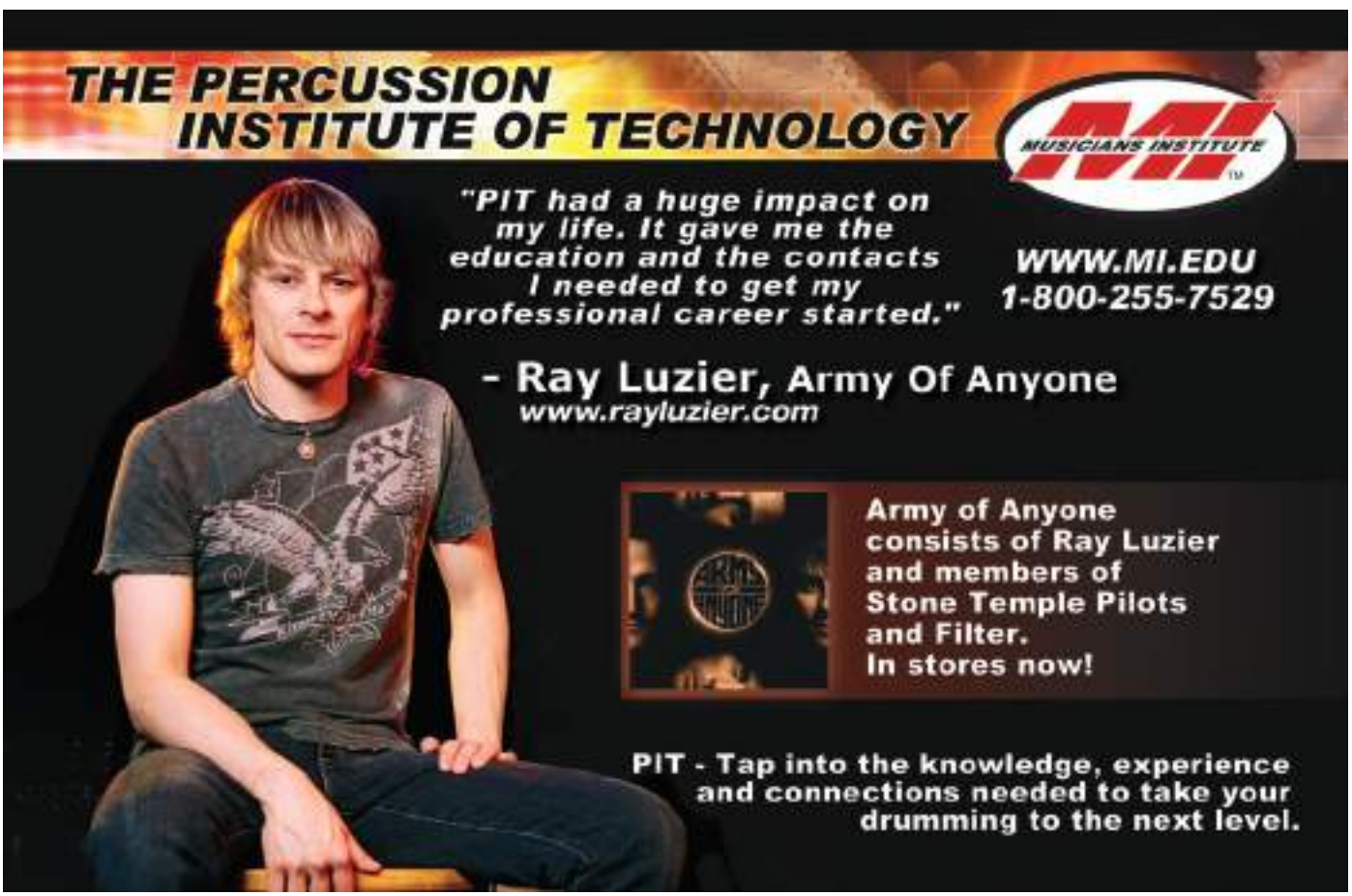
Book Of Abraham

MD: I'd like to get back to your playing background. Your stepfather was a drummer?

Abe: Yes, he played good old rock and R&B. There were a lot of great artists coming through Mendocino, like The Grateful Dead and The Byrds, and I grew up hearing all of these jams. And I love the twang, a Telecaster twang. I grew up in California hippie country, and my folks are of that generation.

MD: Was Stewart Copeland your first major influence?

Abe: Definitely. He's the one who did it for me. Back then you couldn't get much in the way of videos, although I did have a couple of Police Betamax tapes. Recently I got Copeland's *Everyone Stares*, which filled in all the blanks for me as far as The



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Abe Cunningham

Police are concerned. But Copeland was a tremendously hard hitter even though he played traditional grip. It was so great to see him get all of that power from his left hand. When you see videos of him, his hands are all bandaged up. My parents were Police fans too, and we saw them in 1981 on their *Ghost In The Machine* tour. I was sitting on my dad's shoulders and it was raining.

MD: Did you play along with Police records?

Abe: Oh, yeah. I loved to play with *Zenyatta Mondatta*. And then I got into their earlier records. That was life-changing for this small child.

MD: Who else had an impact on that small child?

Abe: I loved The Byrds' *Untitled,* with Gene Parsons on drums. He's an amazing guitarist who just happened to play drums with The Byrds. Hippie country California twang music had a huge influence on me. Then I got into David Robinson with The Cars, Neil Peart with Rush, and Tommy Lee with Mötley Crüe. And, of course, everything I listened to was on cassette! I always listened to anything I could. These days I love Jon Theodore, who was with The Mars Volta.

MD: Now the record is completed, Bob Ezrin is gone, and Deftones are out on the road. Will there still be friction in the band?

Abe: We'll always have friction, but at the same time we're closer than ever. The battle cycle is starting now. We have two years of tours planned. We're brothers, and if there wasn't an occasional spat between brothers, it wouldn't be normal.

MD: What do you like to do with your downtime?

Abe: I love to cook. My mom was a chef, and I grew up in kitchens. I love to make pasta. I'm the carbo kid: rice, potatoes—mashed, fried, au gratin—any form of carbs.

Kitchens are like music. There's a lot of camaraderie in the kitchen, and there's always music playing. There's fusion in music, and fusion in cooking, too. It's an exciting time, so many flavors are being mixed. It's all about fresh ingredients.

To hear some of Abe Cunningham's tracks, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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Elton John's NIGEL O

No one plays a pop song like Nigel Olsson, and his triumphant return to Elton John's band has allowed the veteran musician to inspire drummers all over again.

Nigel Olsson That classic beat

When news hit in the mid-'80s that Nigel Olsson was no longer playing drums with Elton John, the singer *and* the drummer's fans were shocked. Nigel's name had practically become synonymous with Elton's music. Without a doubt, the drummer's impact on the pop star's music would be sorely missed.

Going *way* back, Olsson's career before Elton showed promise. The untrained drummer (who learned by playing along with records) had been in a pop psychedelic unit called Plastic Penny, did a stint with The Spencer Davis Group (post–Steve Winwood), and even held the drum seat in Uriah Heep for a short while before he and bassist Dee Murray, along with Elton, formed the nucleus of The Elton John Band in 1970. Elton used studio musicians to record his first album, *Empty Sky*, although Olsson recorded one song on that album, "Lady What's Tomorrow." But then Olsson and band went on their first major tour with Elton, and a magical bond was set.

The power of this new musical unit was undeniable. When Elton hired Davey Johnstone on guitar, the group recorded a phenomenal run of hit albums, including *Honky Chateau*, *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player*, *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, and *Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy*.

In 1975, after *Captain Fantastic*, Olsson and Elton went their separate ways for a few years. But by '80, Olsson was back in the fold and all was well. As is often the case, though, an artist craves new blood to inspire new creativity, and after a major world tour in 1984, Elton decided to let Olsson and Murray go. Sometimes the concept works, and sometimes there's something lacking. Most critics would agree that Elton's band was never the same until Olsson returned. Sadly, Murray never got that chance. He died of a stroke in 1992 while fighting cancer.

While away from John, though, Olsson recorded solo projects and put his energy into his other love, car racing, where he enjoyed much success. (Although when Dale Earnhardt died in 2001, Elton implored Olsson to quit the sport.)

In 2000, when Elton finished his Disney project, *The Road To El Dorado*, Olsson got a much longed-for call asking if he would return. It was only to sing backgrounds on the promotional tour for that project, and although he felt strange not playing drums, Olsson was thrilled to be back. But it wasn't long before the drummer returned to his throne. Today Olsson is in top form, laying down the perfect pop groove that brought him to prominence in the '70s.

With a new album out, *The Captain & The Kid*, (the sequel to *Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy*), as well as a lengthy tour, it's obvious that Nigel's third coming was meant to be. According to Olsson, the recording of the new album—touted as Elton's best since his classic '70s LPs—felt similar to those magical days of yore. It seemed like a good time to walk down memory lane and to talk about some of those historic Elton John recordings.

Story by Robyn Flans • Photos by Paul La Raia

MD: What was the first big Elton John hit that you played on?

Nigel: Probably "Rocket Man." We recorded that at the Chateau outside Paris, and in those days it was just Elton, Dee Murray, and me. Davey Johnstone joined the band for that record as well. Before that it was just the three-piece along with [lyricist] Bernie Taupin, of course, who used to come on the road with us.

I think "Rocket Man" was the first or second take, and it was the first time I could go back in the studio to overdub tom-toms. Up 'til then, it was four-track. This was eight and sixteen. I was able to do a few things on that record that we had never been able to do before, and we had a lot of fun doing that stuff.

"Rocket Man" came out when the US was first sending astronauts to the moon. NASA wanted to use the song for the space program, and we did actually get to go to NASA in Houston, which was very cool.

While recording at the Chateau, we lived there for a month. Elton would get the lyrics from Bernie, sit down and write the melody, and we'd be right there in the studio. So we were with those songs from their conception, which was the beauty of all of it.

MD: How was it presented? Bernie gave the lyrics to Elton, Elton sat down at the piano, and you guys just created along with him?

Nigel: Yes, and that's still how it's done. Most of those songs that were big, big hits were written in fifteen, twenty minutes.

MD: I think you once told me that "Daniel" was written in fifteen minutes and recorded in two hours.

Nigel: Yes. We still do stuff like that, although nowadays we use all that Pro Tools stuff, which I don't really like.

MD: When I think about your drumming, I think about "Daniel."

Nigel: My style of playing gelled with that song. I didn't want too many fills in it; it was about keeping the rhythm. There's a lot of hi-hat on that record, I remember. It was just a very easygoing tempo and a fantastic song. It was very inspirational.

I'm very inspired by songs like that. In fact, I like a big ballad more than something fast, like a "Crocodile Rock" or a "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting." On those faster, heavier tunes, you're just bashing away. I always try to steer away from playing too much. Producer Gus Dudgeon and I sat down one time and he said, "It's what you leave out that people love in your playing." You might be expecting a huge fill to come, but it never does. I think that leaves listeners on the edge of their seats. I'm not a technical drummer at all. I don't read or anything like that. It all comes from my heart and my head. And I try to leave big spaces.

MD: Where did your less-is-more approach come from? You didn't have lessons, so what inspired you to play like that when you first started?

Nigel: I was inspired in the early days by a guy named Bobby Elliott, the drummer with The Hollies. He used to do some off-the-wall drum fills where you wouldn't expect them. The way he planned them was amazing to me. Most of my big signature fills come from listening to him.

MD: Did you ever see him play live?

Nigel: No, I never did, but I saw him on TV, and the way he played inspired me. And I never got to meet Bobby, though he must know that I ripped him off many times. Of course, when Ringo came along, that was *it* for me.

MD: Do you recall certain songs that The Hollies played that inspired you?

Nigel: "Carrie Anne," "Bus Stop." I loved *everything* that group did.

Talking about Ringo, my wife and I went to see the *Love* show in Vegas, which features The Beatles' music. The way Giles Martin has mixed the songs is absolutely magnificent. The drum tracks are outstanding. It had me on the edge of my seat. It was so good to hear Ringo that way, up front. I think "A Day In The Life" is great. It's just that thing I love—the timekeeping, the space, and the

"I always try to steer away from playing too much. You might be expecting a huge fill to come, but it never does. I think that leaves listeners on the edge of their seats."

drum fills.

There's a young English drummer, Richard Hughes from the band Keane, who is amazing. He's very Ringo-esque. He really has it right. He's not bashing everything in sight, and he leaves out what you don't need.

MD: Speaking of spaces, let's talk about "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me."

Nigel: That was another one that was just right for me. My signature on the intro of these songs is the 24" ride cymbal with rivets. I play that with the hi-hat going at the same time, and you can hear that on most of the ballads. That all comes down to correctly positioning the microphone in the studio. I need a big room, because of the ambient delay. You can't get that sound with a machine. It has to be a big room with the ambience and the natural delay that comes from it. On "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me," that was what it was—that big, big sound.

MD: Do you remember coming up with that signature of yours?

Nigel: It's just a thing that Gus and I came up with. Instead of using delays, mechanically, we would have a natural delay by close-miking the drums and then placing a couple of microphones in each corner of the room, high up in the rafters.

MD: You did some Elton stuff at Caribou Ranch in Colorado.

Nigel: Caribou was amazing because it was way up in the Rockies and we'd stay there for a month. During down time in the summer we could go horseback riding. In the winter, we would go snowmobiling. When we cut "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds," John Lennon was up there with us for a week. That was tremendous.

MD: On the Elton box set there's a performance of "I Saw Her Standing There" with Lennon at Madison Square Garden.

Nigel: That was the last show he ever did. At Caribou, it was amazing to be able to hang out with him. He was just a normal person.

When we were at that gig at the Garden, John was so nervous that Davey had to tune his guitar—he was shaking so much. He said, "I think I'm going to be sick now." When he got on stage, the place went nuts. The Garden is up on the fourth floor or something, and when people start rockin' out, the floor bends. When he came out, the floor was bending so much that my drum riser was rocking. I had to re-plan where I was going to hit cymbals because they were almost out of reach. I think that was the most emotional, moving show I've ever done. He came out on the road a couple of times with us, too, just to hang out.

MD: Please talk about recording "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting."

Nigel: That's an interesting story. It didn't sound right when we started to record it, with all of us playing at the same time. Gus came over the talk-back in the studio and said, "Elton, why don't you just sing it and we can put the piano on later." We all went, "What?" But we did it and it worked. It was Dee, Davey, and me, with Elton roaring around the studio with a microphone in his hands, screaming. There's so much energy on that track.

Davey and I always talk about how we miss Gus. He passed away a couple of years back. We miss him in the studio terribly.

MD: You recorded car effects on "All The

continued on page 99

Nigel's "A Rig"

Drums: DW Collectors Series in Ferrari red to Williams Formula One fade finish (includes Nigel's logo)

- **A.** 5x14 maple snare
- **B.** 7x8 tom
- **C.** 8x10 tom
- **D.** 9x12 tom
- **E.** 12x14 floor tom
- **F.** 14x16 floor tom
- **G.** 18x22 bass drums with 8x22 Woofers on front

Cymbals: Paiste

1. 14" Signature Power hi-hats
2. 18" Signature Full crash
3. 20" Signature Silver Mellow ride (also used as crash)
4. 24" 2002 ride (with 36 rivets)

Hardware: DW 9000 series stands, 5000TD3 pedals (double chain, Turbo)

Heads: Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter, Ambassador snare-side, coated Ambassadors on tops of toms with smooth white Ambassadors underneath, clear PowerStroke 3 on bass drum batters with custom black or white logo heads on front. (Muffling in the kick drums is a modified "Simon Phillips method," with a small bath towel rolled up and taped to the batter head, plus a standard DW pillow barely touching front head.)

Sticks: Vic Firth American Classic Rock model, plus mallets and brushes

Mics: Shure SM57 on snare (top and bottom), Sennheiser E-835 on toms, 901 on bass drum, AKG 460 for hi-hat and ride, AKG 414 for overheads, Sennheiser E-604 for vocal

Monitoring: Yamaha MX 32/12 mixing desk, Crown D-75 headphone amp, Yamaha R-3 reverb, Sony 7506 headphones

Metronome: Tama RW100 Rhythm Watch

Misc: Nigel always plays wearing Sparko auto driving shoes and FootJoy sports gloves

Percussionist

JOHN M

"Nigel's got that super-fat groove. It gives me a lot of freedom to play and makes me want to be a part of what he's doing."

MAHON
A Rhythmic Voice

For the past ten years, John Mahon has worked for Elton John as a percussionist and background vocalist. His tasteful, grooving playing and great stage presence has added much to the pop star's show.

Starting out as a drummer in Canton, Ohio, first playing in the Police Boys Club Drum & Bugle Corps at twelve, Mahon worked his way through school in the marching and concert bands. He also participated in choir. Mahon's parents turned him on to a diverse collection of music, including polkas, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Bing Crosby. And when The Beatles entered the picture, "Everything changed!" Playing in progressive jazz/rock bands, Mahon's influences widened to include Billy Cobham, Tony Williams, Manu Katché, Airto, Alex Acuña, Omar Hakim, Steve Gadd, Danny Seraphine, Bobby Colomby, and David Garibaldi.

Mahon trekked to LA in '83 with his wife, Pamela, whom he credits for her support. ("She's the one who had the real job.") He attended the Dick Grove School of Music, studying theory and piano. He also studied drums with David Garibaldi, Mark Craney, Michael Wimberly, Memo Acevedo, and Chuck Flores, and a couple of years with teacher Bill Severance, who gave the young player the Berklee technique that *he* had gotten from Alan Dawson. "The cool thing about Bill is that he and I are both ambidextrous," Mahon explains. "So he made me play everything out of the book left-handed and right-handed. I play drums right-handed, but I write left-handed. I put a lot of time in. I practiced a good six hours a day, five days a week, playing along with records and working on the lessons he taught me."

Mahon also took percussion lessons with Bill Halting, and even hired vocal coach Ron Edwards to help him concentrate on that aspect of his talent. Regarding singing and drumming, Mahon says, "You have to get your playing technique to the point where it's second nature. If I'm playing drums and singing a standard and want to float the time a little bit with the vocal, I turn off the drum part. I get into this sort of clock where I'm not really listening to what I'm playing on the drums. It's as if I split myself in half.

"Being a singer has taught me so much about being a drummer," Mahon continues. "I hear things as a singer, like when another musician plays something that clashes with what the singer is doing. I think having that mindset has helped my career."

Indeed, singing has become Mahon's calling card. In the late '80s, he formed a band called The Stickmen with Bob Birch on bass. Then, while working with Peter White, Windows, and Al Stewart, Birch and Mahon kept in touch, leading to some recording at the bass player's house. Down the line, long-time Elton John guitarist Davey Johnstone heard something Mahon had recorded with Birch, which eventually led to his being asked to join Elton's band.

MD: What was the first rehearsal with Elton John like?

John: A little surreal. He walked in; he's bigger than life. We rehearsed in Nice, France for our first gig in Germany. He was very nice—introduced himself, shook my hand—but the scary part was that they had me set up right next to him. So every time he turned his head, I was right in his eyesight!

I had a real small percussion setup, a couple of little instruments, and a Zen Drum. They had just done an album that had a lot of loops on it, but because they didn't want to use a click, I took the loops from the record, cut them up in 16th notes or 8th notes, and played them on the Zen Drum. I was cutting up the loops and actually playing them in time. That was fun.

As time has gone on, my percussion setup has grown. I play some Yamaha electric stuff, and I have an LP setup and lots of Zildjian cymbals. It's still pretty much of a rock 'n' roll setup, though. I don't have any quiet Brazilian instruments. They would get buried. My kit is a little bit of a hybrid kit of drums and percussion. I use a 12" Yamaha snare and a cable hi-hat.

There are certain things Nigel wants me to play to enhance the part he's playing. For instance, on shuffle tunes, he'll want me to play more of a shuffly hi-hat kind of thing. On "Philadelphia Freedom," which is not a shuffle, I do more of a disco-y hi-hat thing on some parts of it. Nigel and I interact in a way where he'll move over to play his floor tom and I'll do the disco thing on the hi-hat, which has become a little signature part of the song.

On "This Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore," from *Songs From The West Coast*, I played a shuffle between the hat and the snare drum while Nigel played more of a big, standard rock beat. I played the ghosty shuffle stuff. I have a whole Yamaha DTXtreme kit set up where the pads are all set close together and there's a kick pedal. Most of the time I use those pads for samples and timpani sounds.

Most of the percussion instruments I play with Elton are shakers, tambourine, some conga, and some electronic stuff. Nigel is right next to me, and it's really easy to lock into him because he's got such a big groove. He's one of those drummers who gets into a groove that you can just naturally fall into.

MD: When you started, Charlie Morgan was on drums, right?

John: Yes. They didn't want a lot of percussion at the time. They just wanted me to be in the background and play a lot of light stuff to add some color. Charlie is a great drummer too. He was busier than Nigel, so he covered some of the percussion parts and some little electronic parts.

MD: But your role was a little different with him than it is with Nigel.

John: After Charlie, Jack Bruno was with the band for a short time. Then Curt Bisquera came in for a short time. All three are great players, but my role would change depending on who was playing drums.

Nigel's got that super-fat groove. It gives me a lot of freedom to play, and it makes me want to be a part of what he's doing. I think in some ways Nigel makes me think a little more about what I'm going to play. He has those signature fills: He's the guy who played all those amazing fills in the first place, so I think to myself, "I don't want to just play some stupid thing over them." It makes me think a little bit more when I watch him play.

MD: Do you ever talk about what you're going to do, or do you just do it?

John: We pretty much just do it. There's been a rare occasion where he might want me to do something the same all the time to give him that signal of, "Here comes the bridge," or something like that. It works both ways. I'll know from some little thing he does that it's the lead into the second B section or something like that. It's great because that way I can play off of him and he can play off of me, and it makes it much more enjoyable. Let's face it, we're playing the same songs a lot.

Nigel has a difficult job because on occasion Elton will want to push the time. He might want a song a little faster, and sometimes naturally, Nigel is trying to hold

him back. At times Elton can be like a wild mustang. There's so much talent and power in the way he plays, so Nigel is always trying to pull back on the reins and keep it in the pocket.

MD: Where do you fit in that combo?

John: I listen mostly to Elton—his piano and his vocal—and then to Nigel, in that order. I sing so much harmony with Elton that I need to have his voice really loud in my monitors for pitch and for phrasing. He's always changing the phrasing. I sing "Daniel" with him, and sometimes he'll change the phrasing on that!

There are rare occasions when I have to actually look at Nigel and watch the stick hit the drum. That's because we're such a loud band that sometimes I'll lose him. Davey is on electric guitar between Nigel and me, and sometimes I'm looking at Nigel to make sure I'm with him. It's really difficult to play percussion at that volume because I'm playing the quietest instruments on stage. If I'm playing an egg shaker, forget about it.

I wear in-ear monitors by Ultimate Ears, and sometimes I'll just pull one of them out a little bit, which lets me hear my percussion naturally. But it's the kiss of death for the vocals. A lot of times I'll play the shaker in my right hand, I'll crack the ear monitor on my left ear a little so I can hear ambience, and when the vocal part comes in, I'll slap that monitor back in all the way. I'm really trying to finesse my acoustic surroundings. It depends on the song.

Say we're playing "The Bitch Is Back." I pretty much stick to the instruments I know I'm going to hear, which are the two LP Cyclops synthetic tambourines I have. I'll hit them together, or I'll play mounted tambourines and cowbell with a stick. I won't mess around with the quiet stuff. When we do "Rocket Man," I do have a lot of little bell sounds, triangles, and stuff like that, and those are difficult. It's an ongoing experiment. If everyone in the band wore in-ears, there might not be the problem.

MD: Why doesn't everyone wear them?

John: Elton thinks we're a bunch of wimps. He's tried them once or twice and doesn't like them. Honestly, I don't love them either, but….

I went to see Tony Bennett in Vegas recently and there were no in-ear monitors up there. It was beautiful. For some songs, I'll just take my ear monitors out, like when we play "Your Song," which is the last song of the night. That's the only song I don't sing on. I pretty much just play shakers, so I take them out and it's like, "Ahhhhh!" At that point, I'm playing to Nigel and Elton.

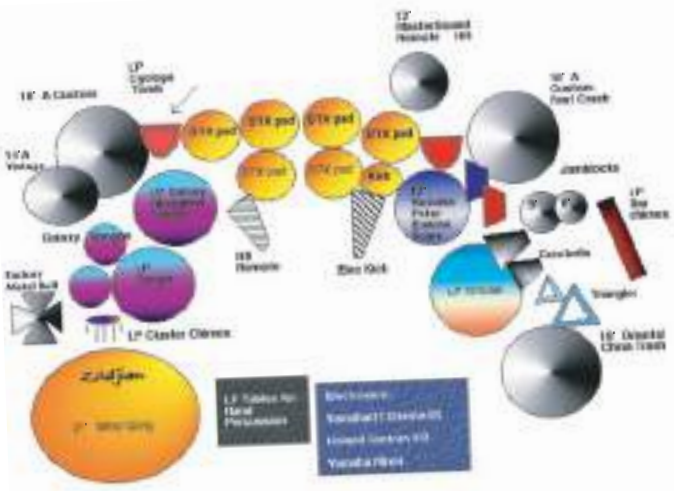
MD: How do you come up with your parts?

John: I have to give kudos to Ray Cooper. Pretty much what I do is play the parts he came up with. On some of the more famous tunes, like "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me," it's just a classic one-smack on the tambourine and then a big suspended cymbal build. But for other parts, I've taken what he's done and put my own spin on it.

John's Percussion Setup

Percussion: Latin Percussion
Cymbals: Zildjian
Heads: Remo
Hardware: Yamaha

Sticks: Vic Firth Bash Man stick/mallet, signature stick, TG5 mallet



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John Mahon

Last year we played the entire *Captain Fantastic* album at Madison Square Garden. Elton didn't want to do it at first, and he had a hard time remembering the songs—until we actually got him into the rehearsal and he started doing it. He got extremely emotional, because the songs brought back so many memories. What Ray Cooper did was so creative on that album. He did a lot of small, subtle things with the bongos, some gong stuff, and the Vibra-Slap. It was all so well-done and fun to re-create.

MD: How about recording with Elton?

John: We did *Live At Madison Square Garden* and then we did *Peachtree Road*. That record was fun because we did it all in Atlanta, where he has a house. It's great recording there, and it's not so hustle/bustle. That was my first real chance to sit in the studio with him and watch him write. He likes to write sometimes to just a simple drum machine beat, so there were a few days when I was just sitting next to the piano with a little drum machine, feeding him a simple beat. It was cool, but a little nerve-racking to be right there with him while he was writing, especially the times he would look up and go, "Do you like when I go to this chord, or do you like when I go to this chord?" That was probably the most nerve-racking part.

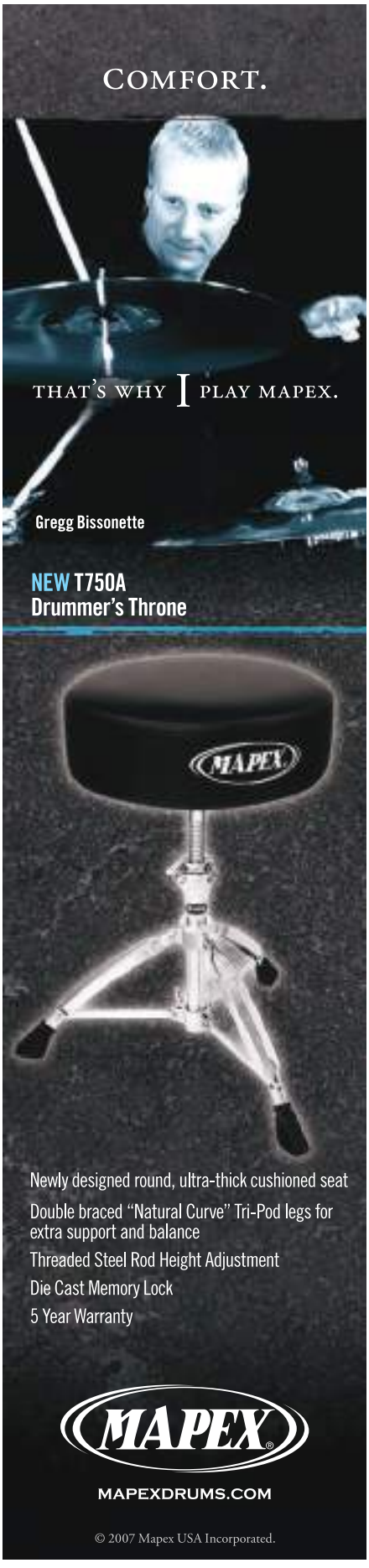
MD: What about this new album?

John: The current album is very cool because it's organic. There's no choir and no orchestra. We pretty much cut it down to the five-piece band. Most of the rhythm tracks were recorded with Elton, Nigel, and Bob. One tune, "Old 67," was a first take. Nigel had this big fat swingy groove. He has that incredible thing where he can sorta swing and sorta play straight at the same time, which is so difficult to do.

When we played the last song, "Captain And The Kid," we couldn't quite figure out what to do. The producer and I talked about maybe doing a train beat with brushes. Nigel said, "I can't do that," so he had me do that. We tried the drums, but they were too heavy on that song. That was brushes, and then when it goes back into the B section, into regular time, that's Nigel playing the kit.

"I Must Have Lost It In The Wind" is just me playing cajon. The drums were too big for that song, so I suggested that. You can get the "thump" of a kick drum and the "pop" of a snare drum out of a cajon.

I played drums on a couple of the tracks on the *Billy Elliot* soundtrack, on the songs that are more jazzy, which Nigel doesn't really like to play. Speaking of that, I would like to say that my drumming roots have really helped my percussion playing. When I started working with Elton, sometimes I would just stop and think to myself, Don't play anything, John. Just stand there…and listen.



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—Stanton Moore

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kick 26" **D6**

snare top and bottom **i-5**

snare two **D4**

hi hat **SCX1-HC**

pandero **D4**

rack ,floor1,floor2 **MICRO M1244**

overheads **CX112**

ride cymbal **SCX1-C**

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Young Girls Love Alice."

Nigel: There's a part in that song where an ambulance sound comes in, and Gus told our album coordinator he wanted a sound effect of it roaring up, doors opening, doors closing, and roaring off. Steve, our coordinator, said, "The perfect person to do that would be Nigel, because he has all these cars." I had an original 1970 Mini Cooper that was all fixed up and loud as hell. So Steve asked me to hook up a microphone to the exhaust pipe and record it. I lived out in the country, so I roared up and down this road with my brother Carl. We taped a microphone to the back bumper above the exhaust and he got out and slammed a couple of doors, and I roared back off again. They sent a taxi to my farm, which took the tape to Trident Studios, and they put it on the record that day.

MD: What about "Someone Saved My Life Tonight"?

Nigel: That's one of my favorite songs that we ever did. I could really put my signature on that song. It was perfect for the way I play. I could do my big drum fills and stay out of the way where I needed to. It was such an atmospheric song, kind of dark. And being in the studio, it was huge in the headphones. I heard Elton writing it, and when he sang it the first time, I said, "That's a number-1 record right there." He hadn't finished it yet when I said that, he was just halfway through it. But the atmosphere, the lyrics, and the truth in it…we all knew it would be huge.

When I play that song on stage, I still get goosebumps. I also get them on "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" and "Candle In The Wind." We haven't done "Candle In The Wind" as a band for many years, though. Since Princess Diana died, Elton does it solo. But I used to love playing that song.

MD: As you're listening to him write a song, are you mentally playing it?

Nigel: Yes. I'm always thinking about how I'm going to do it. That's the magic that happens when you go in the studio with Elton. You don't really think about it too much, at that point, though obviously you have to when the red light goes on. But it's so natural because we've been together for such a long time and we're on the same wavelength.

MD: That brings us to a pertinent question: What happened with you being out of the band for a while?

Nigel: Elton just wanted to change the band around to see if he could come up with something else. He had gotten so far with Dee, Davey, and me, and he thought if he changed the lineup, he might go in a different musical direction.

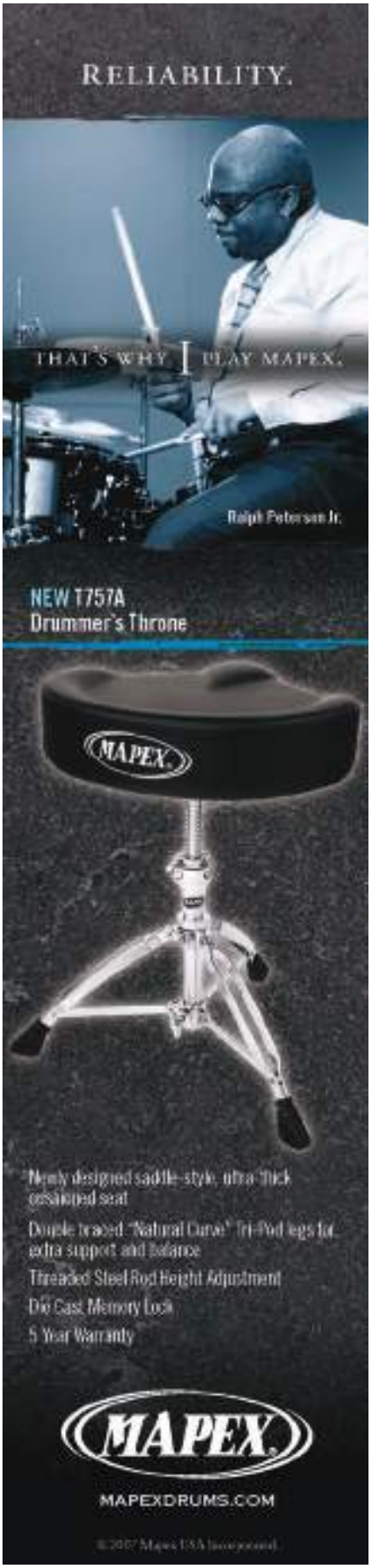
MD: I know you had returned to do background vocals, but how did you end up on drums?

Nigel: We were rehearsing for a show in New York, which was when Curt Bisquera was playing drums in the band. Curt actually said to Davey that there were songs like "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" that really should be played by me, and so Davey cleared it for me to play on some of the songs. And after that show, Davey called and asked me how my stamina was and if I thought I could get away with bashing away for a couple of hours like I used to. I said, "Yes. Why?" And he said Elton wanted me back.

MD: So Curt talked himself out of a job.

Nigel: He came to me after the fact and said, "I always knew you were the only one who could play those songs like they should be played." Curt was incredible, and he also introduced me to the guys at DW and helped me get that whole sponsorship going. Curt is part of the reason I'm back.

Elton did his first gig with me back on drums in Honolulu, and usually he comes off stage and immediately goes to change or get in a car. But that night he waited until I came off stage. He gave me a hug



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and said, "What was I thinking letting you go?" I was overwhelmed.

Speaking of that night, I was so nervous going up there. Actually, I'm nervous every time I go on stage. I shake before I go on. But once I get up there, it's fine. The regular show we do in Vegas is ninety minutes long, which is great. The road gigs, though, are almost three hours long.

MD: What did you do to work yourself up to that?

Nigel: You just have to go for it and pace yourself. I drink lots of fluids and don't do drugs. And pacing is everything. Sometimes it's tough when you have three or four gigs back to back in different countries.

MD: In my interview with Elton's percussionist, John Mahon, he mentioned that sometimes you have to work hard at keeping Elton reined in on the tempos.

Nigel: Yes, I do my best to hold the tempos back. God loves a tryer!

MD: Let's talk a little about working with a percussionist like John Mahon, or like Ray Cooper, who you previously played with in Elton's band. What about those spaces?

Nigel: Johnny knows where to leave spaces. We've been together five years now, and we know how to stay out of each other's way. He's a great timekeeper, which I loved about Ray Cooper as well. John's a great singer, too. He'll sing some of the parts I used to do, because I'm not getting any younger! [laughs] There are some notes I can't hit now, especially when I'm bashing away. But the important ones I still do, like on "Someone Saved My Life Tonight." On recent records I'm still hitting the high parts.

MD: What did you like most about making this new album?

Nigel: This album is almost back to how we did it in the early days, when we'd go in as a band and play stuff live. I hate playing with click tracks because, for me, it takes the feeling out of it.

MD: No click on this new album?

Nigel: A couple of songs we did absolutely live, and then the Pro Tools kicked in.

MD: What were the live ones?

Nigel: "Tinderbox" and "Blues Never Fade Away." To be back as a whole unit is so great. We recorded the whole thing on a soundstage in Atlanta. We set up as we would on stage. I had baffles and stuff so the sound wouldn't spill all over. It was Elton, Davey, John, and me.

MD: Did John do the basics with you?

Nigel: John did some of the basics with tambourine or something, and then he'd overdub the rest. But working as a unit is the key to Elton's music, I think. When you have to overdub on a piano track, it's not the same as getting the inspiration at the time of that first take, when you're all playing together. When we do our classic background vocals, which I love doing, they now fly them in, as opposed to the old days, when you sang the whole thing. That was part of our magic. But it's getting back to the old days, and I think the next record will go back even further.

MD: Any thoughts on playing and singing?

Nigel: It just comes naturally to me. I've always done it. There are some things now where I'll let Johnny sing the part because I haven't got a clue how I did it originally. But there are some parts that Elton sings where my voice is the closest to his in the mix, so I'll double his part or sing the harmony.

MD: If you were teaching someone to sing and play at the same time, what would you tell them?

Nigel: I would say that if you start thinking about it too much, it's going to screw you up. Everything has to gel into one.

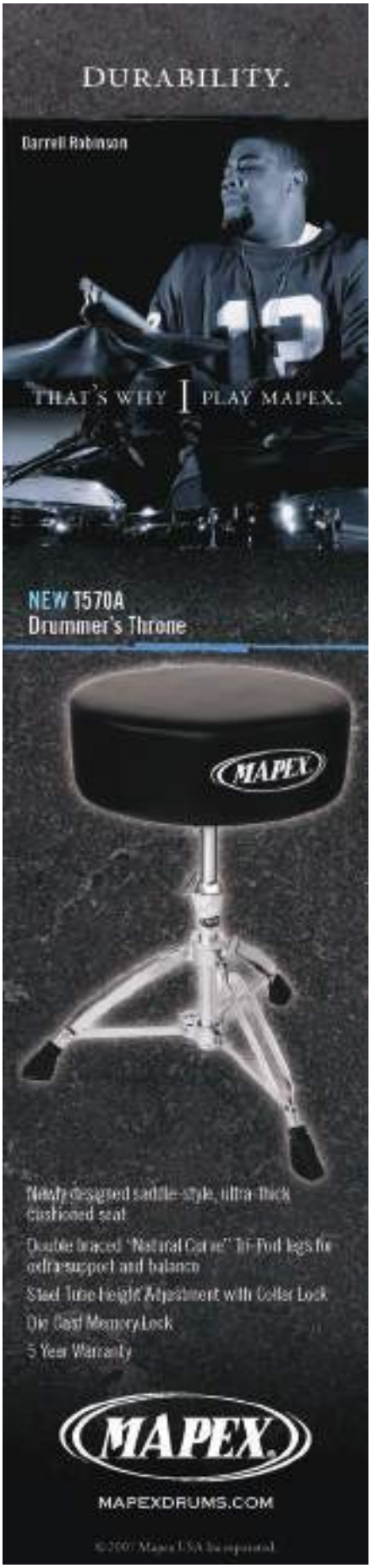
MD: When you go down memory lane, you must be stunned by the legacy of music you've contributed to. How does that make you feel?

Nigel: It's not often that I think about it. But it is amazing to be part of musical history and to still be working—and probably working harder than I've ever worked in my life. And here I am at age fifty-eight. We're still one of the top-selling acts in the world, and to have been involved with most of Elton's huge hits and classic songs is amazing.

MD: And you didn't just play them, you created the parts that helped form the song.

Nigel: The songs have got my signature, and nobody can take that away from me. It's overwhelming when you think about it. I've been involved since the beginning, and here I am, back again—as an old geezer doing it! My granddaughter Katie said to me, "Granddad, you're not old. You're just not very young anymore." I think about that when we're trotting around the world.

To hear Olsson and Mahon, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.



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The Top Drum Tracks of the 1980s

By Joe Bergamini

Among many musicians, it seems the '80s are generally remembered for big-haired glam bands and cheesy new wave tunes. Obviously, many of the hits of that decade fit these descriptions, reflecting the more carefree attitude of those times. But as a teenager and aspiring drummer in the '80s, the music that I loved and learned from was much different. There were many highly artistic and influential albums made then, and they still sound every bit as good today.

Let's go back and take a look at some of the recordings that every drummer should be aware of from the '80s. If this brings back memories for you, great! If you're too young to have heard these songs when they were new, even better; I highly recommend that you track them down and prepare to enjoy some great music.

Clockwise from left: Carl Palmer, Jeff Porcaro, Tommy Lee, Nicko McBrain, Scott Rockenfield

Ebet Roberts

Rick Malkin

30. "Eyes Of A Stranger"
Queensÿche, *Operation: Mindcrime* (1988)
Scott Rockenfield

Scott Rockenfield mixes the detailed chops of Neil Peart into his playing on this song, the climax of 1988's conceptual metal masterpiece, *Operation: Mindcrime*. This track shows why the band was so admired by their peers in rock and metal.

29. "Cityboy"
David Lee Roth, *Eat 'Em And Smile*, (1986)
Gregg Bissonette

This barn-burner features virtuosos Steve Vai and Billy Sheehan having a shred-fest over Gregg Bissonette's driving double bass groove. Fun stuff.

28. "Where Eagles Dare"
Iron Maiden, *Piece Of Mind* (1983)
Nicko McBrain

I don't know about anyone else, but I wore out my copy of *Piece Of Mind* trying to figure out the introductory drum fill to this song. Nicko had big shoes to fill when he joined Maiden; his predecessor, Clive Burr, played some great parts on their earlier records. Perhaps this is what drove Nicko to come up with the absolutely amazing single-kick-drum work and ride/snare interplay on this song.

27. "Red Hot"
Mötley Crüe, *Shout At The Devil* (1983)
Tommy Lee

Although Tommy became known for his stick-twirling skills and bad-boy image, make no mistake about it, the guy is a badass drummer with a serious groove. "Red Hot" was probably more influential among drummers than any of Crüe's bigger hits, due to Tommy's driving double bass groove on the song.

26. "Africa"
Toto, *Toto IV* (1982)
Jeff Porcaro

This song, one of the most memorable hits of the '80s, is built upon a loop of a groove that Jeff Porcaro played. The overdubbed tom fills are vintage Porcaro, and the looping groove has a hypnotic feel. (Be sure to also check out the version of "Africa" on the *Toto Live In Paris* DVD to hear how Jeff played this song in concert.)

25. "Heat Of The Moment"
Asia, *Asia* (1982)
Carl Palmer

In today's super-compartmentalized music industry, a group made up of art-rock musicians playing pop tunes would probably not even get their album into the big chain entertainment stores. And yet, in 1982, "Heat Of The Moment," featuring Carl Palmer's high-spirited drum part, was one of the biggest songs in the world. Dig the cool pseudo-marching snare drum licks during the outro. Those were the days.

24. "Sledgehammer"
Peter Gabriel, *So* (1986)
Manu Katché

Manu Katche's bouncy jazz-funk feel propels this gigantic '80s hit from Peter Gabriel's smash album *So*. Gabriel makes some of the world's most intelligent pop music, and this album is one of his best. Katché became a highly sought-after drummer based largely on his contributions to this classic of the era, going on to play with another '80s giant, Sting.

23. "Back In Black"
AC/DC, *Back In Black* (1980)
Phil Rudd

Phil Rudd's performance on "Back In Black" is simply one of the greatest meat-and-potatoes, less-is-more, straight-ahead, no-nonsense rock 'n' roll grooves ever recorded.

22. "In The Air Tonight"
Phil Collins, *Face Value* (1982)
Phil Collins

In addition to displaying Phil Collins' great songwriting and inventive use of the drum machine, this tune boasts one of the most famous drum entrances ever, featuring one of Phil's signature licks, as well as his trademark gated-reverb concert tom sound. No one, but *no* one, can get single-headed toms to sound like Phil Collins.

Gregg Bissonette

Neil Zlozower

21. "Sister Cristian"

Night Ranger, *Midnight Madness* (1983)
Kelly Keagy

The drum part Kelly Keagy played on this mega-hit of the '80s is hugely memorable and well constructed. One of the signature parts of the song is the building crescendo on the toms that introduces the chorus. The grooves in the verses and during the guitar solo, as well as all the fills, are very tasty. And there's a huge ending featuring Keagy's thunderous fills that's perfect for air drumming.

20. "Murder By Numbers"

The Police, *Synchronicity* (1983)
Stewart Copeland

Synchronicity was undoubtedly one of the musical highlights of the 1980s. The album displays Copeland's drumming at the height of its maturity and development with The Police. "Murder By Numbers" is one of his definitive tracks, coupling a creative reggae groove with a driving pop chorus, as well as several syncopated and inventive fills.

19. "Raining Blood"

Slayer, *Reign In Blood* (1986)
Dave Lombardo

Even in the current era of hardcore, metalcore, grindcore, etc., *Reign In Blood* remains one of the most brutal albums ever recorded. The heaviness and speed displayed by Dave Lombardo on this album are unrelenting, literally redefining what was humanly possible with two bass drums. The album's epic closer, "Raining Blood," showcases some signature Lombardo insanity.

18. "Master Of Puppets"

Metallica, *Master Of Puppets* (1986)
Lars Ulrich

Although other bands might have played faster, Metallica was the true titan of the early thrash metal movement. More than any other band, they were responsible for crafting the new, aggressive style of metal that eventually helped to bury the glam movement. "Master Of Puppets" contains lots of cool, aggressive drumming by Lars Ulrich—as well as a very complex arrangement, making it a true landmark in '80s metal.

17. "Jack And Diane"

John Cougar Mellencamp, *American Fool* (1982) Kenny Aronoff

Most of this hit single features a drum machine, but when Kenny Aronoff enters on the drums, he proceeds to play one of those instantly recognizable signature drum parts that defines a song and its time. Legend has it that, upon meeting Kenny, studio star Vinnie Colaiuta vocalized the entire drum break to Kenny, saying, "You're that guy, right?"

16. "Babylon Sisters"

Steely Dan, *Gaucho* (1980)
Bernard Purdie

Though it's not the first recorded appearance of the famous "Purdie Shuffle," "Babylon Sisters" is certainly one of R&B drumming legend Bernard Purdie's signature tracks. The groove is *miles* deep. Jeff Porcaro freely admitted thinking of this feel when he created his signature part on "Rosanna."

15. "Stratus"

Billy Cobham, *Warning* (1985)
Billy Cobham

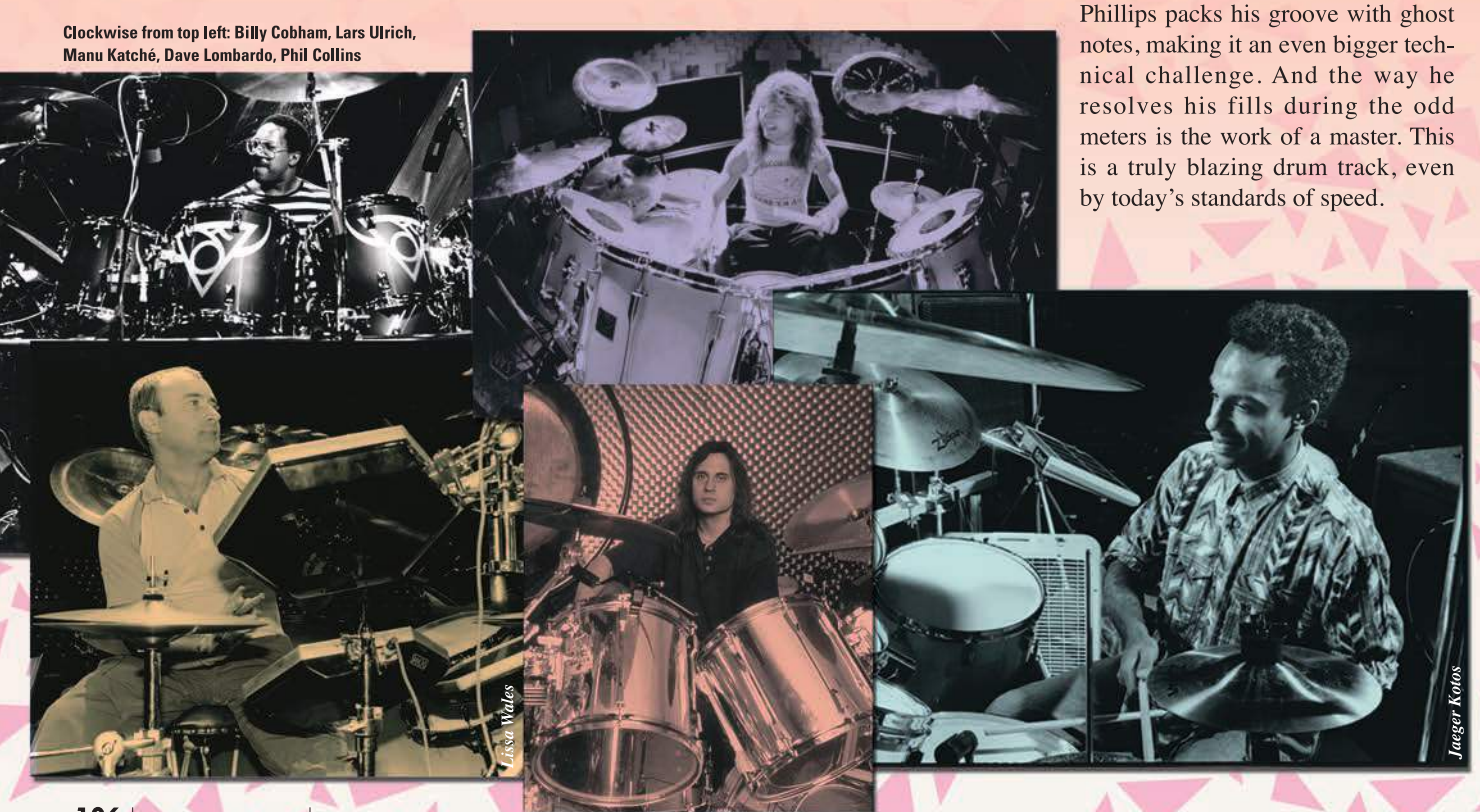
The catchy melody and funky groove of "Stratus" are representative of the direction of Billy Cobham's post-Mahavishnu composing and playing. One of the true masters, Cobham drives the song and carefully chooses the moments to dole out his frightening chops. "Stratus" is now considered a fusion standard.

14. "Space Boogie"

Jeff Beck, *There And Back* (1980)
Simon Phillips

The sheer speed and stamina required to play this uptempo double bass shuffle are daunting enough, never mind the fact that the tune happens to be in seven. Simon Phillips packs his groove with ghost notes, making it an even bigger technical challenge. And the way he resolves his fills during the odd meters is the work of a master. This is a truly blazing drum track, even by today's standards of speed.

Clockwise from top left: Billy Cobham, Lars Ulrich, Manu Katché, Dave Lombardo, Phil Collins



13. "US DRAG"

Missing Persons, *Spring Session M* (1982)
Terry Bozzio

The 6/4 linear groove on this track is one of many drum highlights on *Spring Session M*. After several albums with Frank Zappa, Terry Bozzio's creative powers are on amazing display here, with his tasteful touch on the groove and his quick singles on the RotoToms during the fills.

12. "CHANGES"

Yes, *90125* (1983)
Alan White

"Changes" is just one of the highlights of *90125*, one of the greatest albums of the '80s. This track combines the complexity of art rock with amazingly well-written pop melodies. The opening section, with its alternating 7/8 and 11/8 measures, was devoured and dissected by serious musicians from the moment the song was released. Also check out the thick drum sound, with its controlled reverb.

11. "TOM SAWYER"

Rush, *Moving Pictures* (1981) Neil Peart

Probably the best-known Rush song, "Tom Sawyer" contains a typically detailed and challenging drum part. The one-handed 16th notes on the hi-hat extend almost the entire length of the song, and are an exercise in endurance. This track also contains a healthy dose of Neil's crisp odd-meter playing, as well as one of rock's most memorable drum fill/feature sections.

10. "CULT OF PERSONALITY"

Living Colour, *Vivid* (1988)
Will Calhoun

Will Calhoun's deep groove and energetic chops elevate this track to classic standards. Check out how the open hi-hat is interspersed with the ride cymbal during the song's signature chorus groove. Hearing this confident and polished drum track, we knew that we were being introduced to one of the next generation of drumming greats.

9. "IN THE CAGE"

Genesis, *Three Sides Live* (1982)
Phil Collins & Chester Thompson

Plenty of great drumming can be found on every Genesis album, but the interplay captured between Phil Collins and Chester Thompson on this live album is legendary. Chester plays most of the song by himself, but then Phil leaves the vocal mic and gets behind his kit during the 7/8 keyboard solo. What follows is one of the greatest recorded double drum performances of all time.

8. "CITY NIGHTS"

Allan Holdsworth, *Secrets* (1989)
Vinnie Colaiuta

Secrets is a masterpiece of instrumental virtuosity, and it's bursting with the blazing technique of *the* true drumming genius of our time. Although any track from the album could have occupied the space on the list, Vinnie Colaiuta's playing on "City Nights" kicks the album off with an intense energy—and plenty of untouchable drum licks.

7. "GOT A MATCH?"

Chick Corea, *The Chick Corea Elektric Band* (1986)
Dave Weckl

This album introduced Dave Weckl to the drumming world at large, after which he quickly became one of the most imitated drummers on the planet. This burning track contains a jaw-dropping drum solo that demonstrates the chops, tuning, and touch that made Weckl a legend.

6. "DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'"

Journey, *Escape* (1981)
Steve Smith

Coupling wonderful creativity on the kit with exquisite musical taste, Steve Smith constructed one of the most memorable and unusual rock drum parts of the '80s for this hit song. Smith's use of accents on the tom-toms and ride cymbal during the groove is a perfect example of drumming technique employed in the most musical way.

Clockwise from left: Neil Peart, Terry Bozzio, Simon Phillips, Kenny Aronoff, Bernard Purdie, Alan White

5. "Late in the Evening"

Paul Simon, *One Trick Pony* (1980)
Steve Gadd

Steve Gadd is one of the all-time legends of the instrument, and this track represents one of the most important drum grooves of all time. It's also a wonderful example of the wide-ranging influence on pop music during the '80s. Gadd based this groove on the Afro-Cuban Mozambique feel, and he recorded it with two sticks in each hand.

4. "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic"

The Police, *Ghost In The Machine* (1981)
Stewart Copeland

This is about as good as it gets in pop music in terms of drumming. Stewart Copeland's marriage of reggae and rock styles suits the song perfectly. His unique approach to hi-hat and ride cymbal accents is magical, and impossible to duplicate exactly. Stewart's musical choices on this track are ingenious; listen, for instance, to his placement of crash cymbals.

3. "Hot for Teacher"

Van Halen, *1984* (1984)
Alex Van Halen

Alex Van Halen's drum intro on "Hot For Teacher" certainly is one of the great recorded rock drum moments of all time. The coordination and interplay between the toms and the double bass shuffle sent many a drummer into the practice room in frustration. The song is jam-packed front-to-back with insane drum fills. Also check out how the ride cymbal pattern does not quite line up with the shuffle on the feet: The ride cymbal plays the first two partials of every triplet. And those China cymbals…very cool stuff.

2. "Rosanna"

Toto, Toto IV (1982)
Jeff Porcaro

Jeff Porcaro was one of the all-time groove legends of the drums, and this is his signature track. "Rosanna" is one of a few songs that musicians and lay people recognize instantly from only the drum part. The groove is a masterful marriage of technique and feel; it's extremely challenging to play, but when mastered has an unbelievably smooth feel. The placement of ghost notes and a syncopated bass drum part, coupled with the shuffle, make this groove required study for every drummer.

1. "YYZ"

Rush, *Exit Stage Left* (1981)
Neil Peart

Let's face it, Neil Peart was *the* drum superhero of the 1980s. Something about the combination of Neil's intelligent and complex parts, his rock energy, and above all his imagination (both as a lyricist and a musician) mesmerized thousands of drummers. Basements all across North America were home to large Tama Superstar drumkits and young would-be drum heroes attempting to play…well…usually "YYZ," featuring its famous extended drum solo. The intellectual craft of this drum part, coupled with Neil's solo, make this track one of the highlights in rock drumming history.

Honorable Mentions

"Give Blood,"
Pete Townshend,
White City (1985),
Simon Phillips

"If You Love Somebody
Set Them Free," Sting,
Dream Of The Blue Turtles (1985),
Omar Hakim

"Otay," John Scofield,
Loud Jazz (1989),
Dennis Chambers

"Signed Sealed Delivered
I'm Yours,"
The Gadd Gang,
Live At The Bottom Line (1988),
Steve Gadd

"Cruise Missile,"
Steve Morse Band,
The Introduction (1984),
Rod Morgenstein

"Over The Mountain,"
Ozzy Osbourne,
Diary Of A Madman (1981),
Lee Kerslake

"Jump," Van Halen,
1984 (1984),
Alex Van Halen

"Heavy Duty Judy," Frank Zappa,
You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 3 (1988),
Chad Wackerman

"Holy Diver," Dio,
Holy Diver (1983),
Vinny Appice

Clockwise from left: Steve Smith, Stewart Copeland, Steve Gadd, Chester Thompson, Alex Van Halen

To hear tracks from this article, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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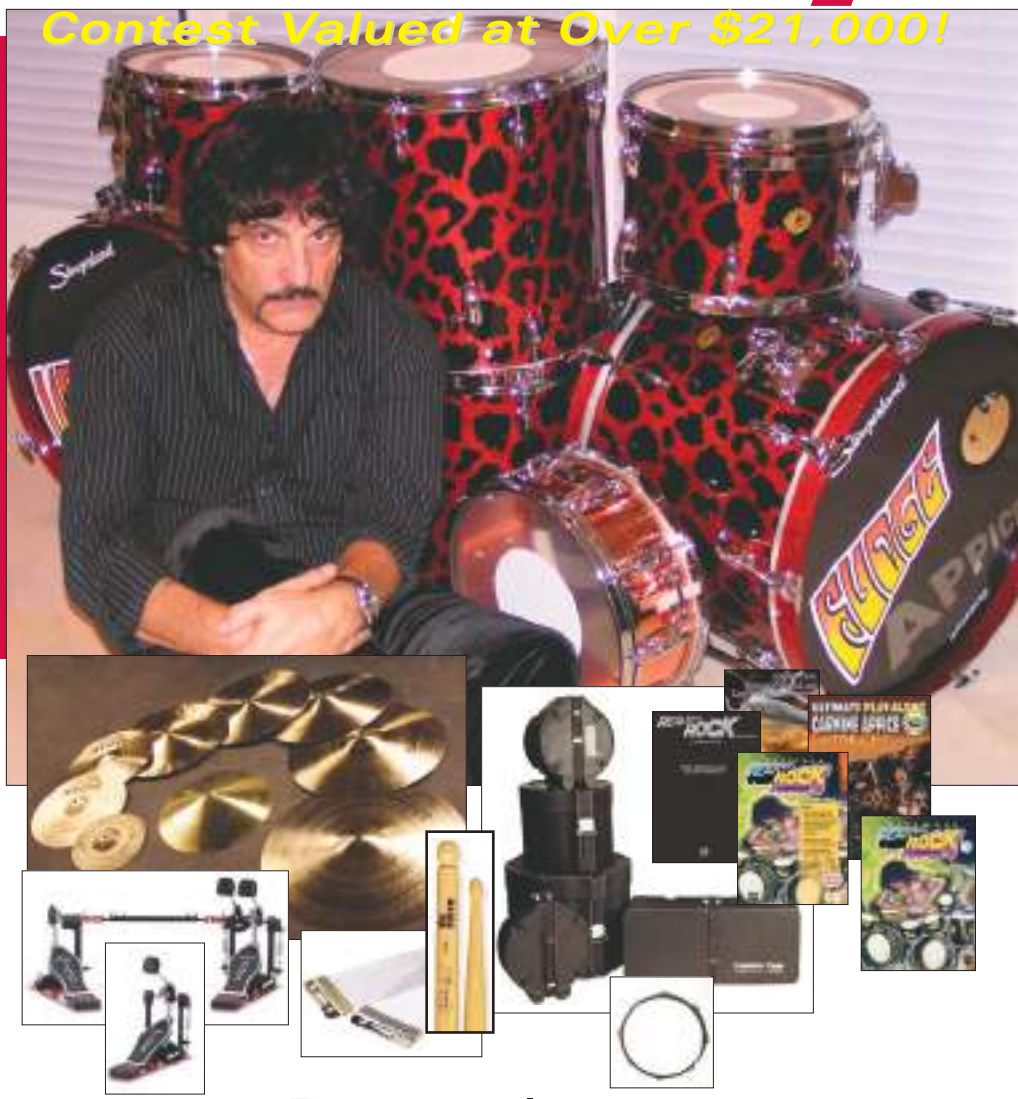

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Nate Morton

Getting Loud In The Valley

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Alex Solca

He's backed a lengthy list of singers while performing in the House Band of the popular CBS television reality series *Rockstar: Supernova*. He's hit the road with pop pianist Vanessa Carlton and KISS front man Paul Stanley. And he's appeared on recordings with Paul Anka and Richard Marx. But if there's one thing that drummer Nate Morton really wants, it's a control room for his home studio.

That's because Morton's current home-recording situation—a custom-built, fully equipped setup inside of the detached garage of his San Fernando Valley–area residence in Los Angeles—is a one-man, one-room operation.

"The biggest limitation is attempting to get drum sounds," Morton says of his studio, better known as Loud Neighbor Productions. "You have to record it, listen back to it, adjust, record it again, listen again…."

But that's just a minor annoyance for someone with some rather major accomplishments. Morton, a Berklee School Of Music grad, came to Los Angeles from Boston in 1999, as he says, "to pursue the American dream, and to get a gig, man!" Nate opted to set up shop on the West Coast since he often found himself flying to LA for various projects, and because he sought a little change in climate.

"I had enough snow in Boston to last a lifetime, and I wasn't thrilled about moving to New York," Morton relates. "I felt like, if I'm going to struggle and start a career from scratch in a brand-new city, it might as well be where the weather is beautiful and happiness is an eighty-degree Christmas!"

Upon settling in LA, Morton found plenty of studio work and was advised to turn his detached garage into a recording room in an effort to make him more marketable as a drummer. Initially the drummer placed some insulation between the garage's vertical studs and covered it with drywall. With a plywood-covered ceiling, a futon, a TV, a computer, and a ceiling-hung light bulb with a pull-chain, Morton was ready for business. Well, kind of. "If I wanted to do more legitimate things and have more legitimate clients here," Nate figured, "the room itself should look more legitimate."

At that point, Morton says, he "came to his senses" and hired a builder to install an insulated wall around the garage, and to remove the plywood ceiling, replacing it with an insulated, textured ceiling.

When construction was finally wrapped, Morton installed a Pro Tools Digi 002 recording setup, connected to a Focusrite

<< Gear Box >>

- Apple Power Mac 2-gHz dual-processor G5
- Two Apple Cinema displays
- Apple iSight camera
- DigiDesign Pro Tools Digi 002 Rack
- Focusrite OctoPre mic preamp
- Chameleon Labs 7602 mic preamp
- Vintech Audio 273 mic preamp
- Focusrite ISA428 mic preamp
- Universal Audio LA610 mic preamp
- Event ASP8 studio monitors
- Yamaha NS-10 studio monitors
- KRK subwoofer
- Pearl Masters Custom drumkit
- Zildjian cymbals
- Roland V-Drum electronic kit
- Shure microphones
- Homemade subwoofer kick drum microphone

OctoPre eight-input digital preamp, giving him sixteen simultaneous inputs.

Morton's main machine is a 2-gHz, dual-processor Apple Mac G5 computer, with two Apple Cinema displays. Audio monitoring is handled by Event ASP8s, a pair of Yamaha NS-10s ("It ain't a studio unless you've got NS-10s," he says), and a KRK subwoofer for a little extra oomph.

One of the little extras in Morton's computer setup is an iSight camera (aimed at the drumkit), which, combined with the iChat application, has allowed him to collaborate on sessions via video-conferencing.

"I'll have Pro Tools here," Nate explains, "and I can run the line of the ProTools rig into the audio input of the iChat. So I'm able to do the session here and play it for the client simultaneously as I'm tracking, over the iSight."

Another computer nicety: Morton established a redundant, portable workstation right next to his drum throne, which allows him to remotely access his Pro Tools sessions without having to step away from the drums, something he learned to implement after dealing with that particular hassle for too long.

"I did that because it was annoying getting up and running back and forth," he says. "I can sit here and mark my spots on where I need to be or whatever. I can basically run the whole session from behind the kit."

The only acoustic drumkit in the room is a four-piece Pearl Masters Custom fitted with Zildjian cymbals. The kit is augmented by shelves crammed primarily with Pearl snares, including a Masters Studio, a Masters Custom (which came from Morton's kit last season), a 14" Reference Series brass (his primary snare on the TV show), a 13" Reference Series maple ("This drum, my auxiliary snare drum on the show, rocks"), a Joey Jordison signature model, and a Steve Ferrone signature model with die-cast hoops [no longer available]. Of that last drum, Morton relates, "Everything that I do in here, this drum gets the first crack at it. It sounds great in any range, cranked up, dive bombed or cross-sticked."

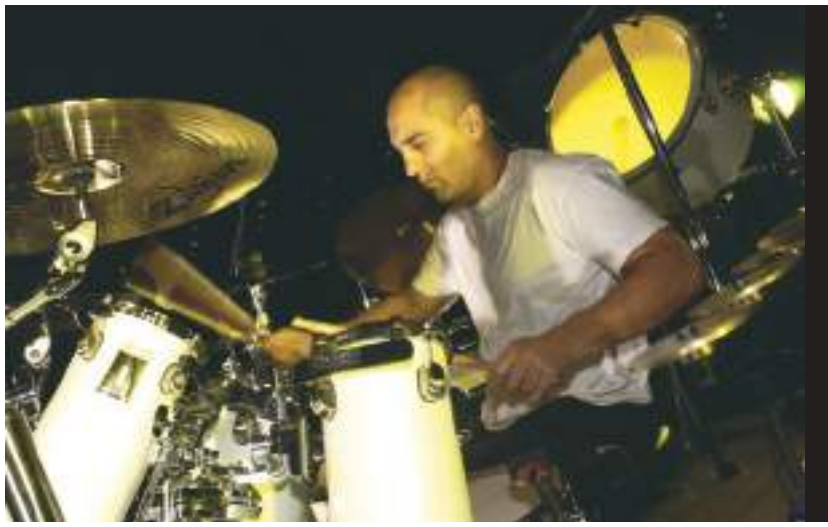
These same shelves also feature a few non-Pearl items, including a vintage Rogers snare modified with the triple-flanged hoops from the Ferrone snare. There's also a BBC snare, a custom snare made by one of Nate's students, Kevin Wilkins, and a Dunnett snare. "I wanted to have a nice, solid wood snare," Nate confides, "and the Dunnett has the characteristics of a metal drum." There's also a Premier piccolo snare. "At the time," Morton recalls, "I was into the Dennis Chambers snare. But Guitar Center didn't have one, so this was the closest I could find in terms of dimensions."

Loud Neighbor sports a few other notable tools, including a pair of Remo congas, some cool Zildjians—there's a flat ride with custom rivets, as well as a Crash Of Doom—an upright piano, a couple of guitars, and a set of Roland V-Drums. "The V-Drums are a great tool in many respects," Morton enthuses. "I play them when it's too late at night to play on the acoustic drums. And I can use them in a variety of ways."

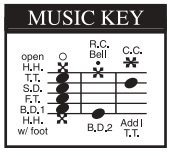
The recordings Morton's made in his comfortable room are quite impressive. Though it's not necessarily large, the space was designed to be "live sounding." "At the time," he figured, "I felt it was easier to make a live room dead than to make a dead room live. So I thought I'd err on the side of it being too live…and I have!" [laughs].

Nate's being humble. In fact, he's produced quality drum tracks at Loud Neighbor for several notable artists, including Richard Marx, Paul Anka, and Michael Thompson.

"The interesting thing is that much of what I can do in here in terms of playing around has a little less to do with the room and more to do with dealing in Pro Tools," Morton says. "These days, ninety percent of what I do here is either recording or engineering. Since having the room, I've done a lot of work that I otherwise wouldn't have done."



Primus's
Tim Alexander
They Can't All Be Zingers
by Ed Breckenfeld

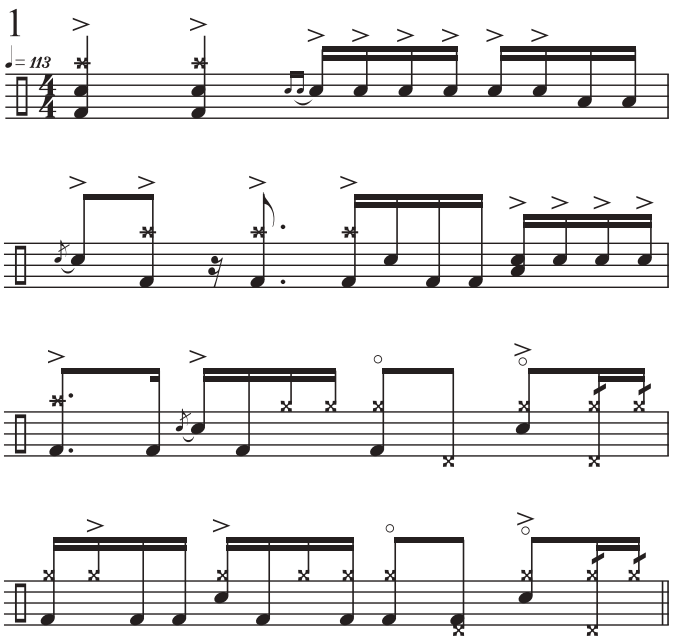


Primus is one of the most unusual bands to find mainstream success. Borderline punk/funk, with a healthy dose of a Rush influence and Frank Zappa–like humor thrown in, Primus's music showcases the instrumental talents of bassist/leader Les Claypool and drummer Tim Alexander.

Each Primus track is built around bizarre vocals and percussive bass sounds, and Tim Alexander's drumming takes on an almost conversational dialog with Claypool's parts. Quirky beats, explosive fills, and solid timekeeping—Alexander employs it all in his work with Primus. Here's a sampling of his playing from the band's new best-of release.

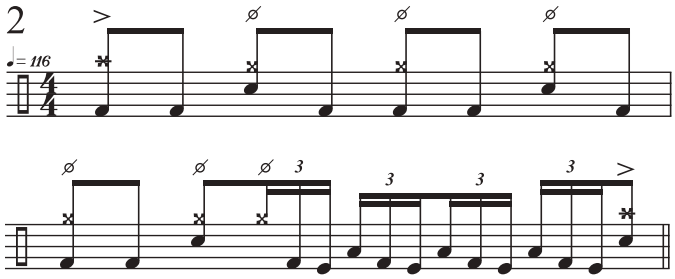
"To Defy The Laws Of Tradition"

This track opens with a bass solo. Alexander's entrance fill embellishes a few accents with Claypool, and then yanks the listener into a great funk groove designed around heavy accents on beats 3 and 4 of each measure. (0:52)



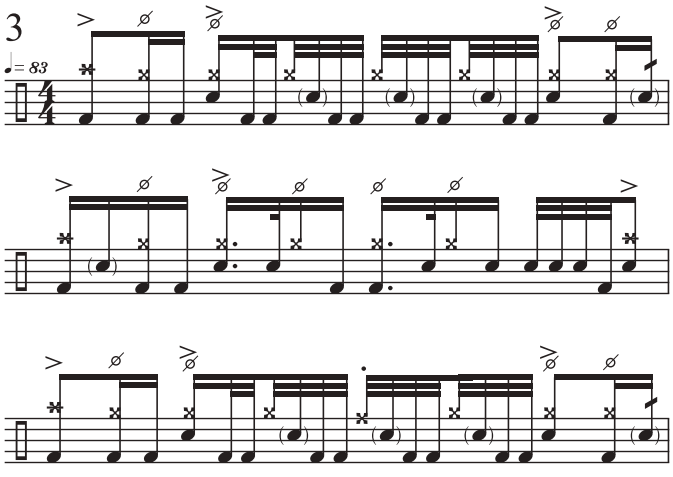
"John The Fisherman"

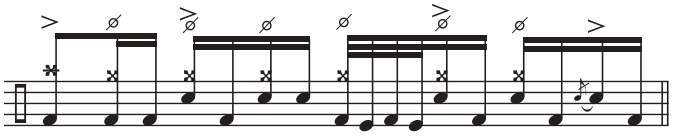
Tim's double kick drum work is always tasty. Here's a cool lick from this song's chorus. (1:48)



"Too Many Puppies"

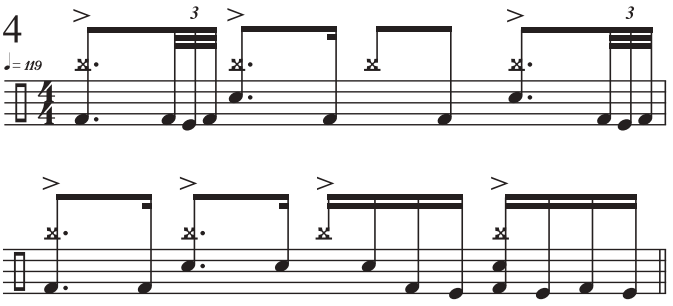
Alexander gets to step out a bit in this four-bar solo. While the majority of the sequence features a loose hi-hat, notice how Tim changes to a closed hi-hat to focus attention on his 32nd-note kicks in bars one and three. (3:29)





"Jerry Was A Race Car Driver"

The bridge of this quirky hit simulates the intensity and chaos of a car race. Claypool shouts "Go!" and shifts into overdrive as Tim switches to his China cymbal to drive home the groove over double bass flourishes. (1:36)

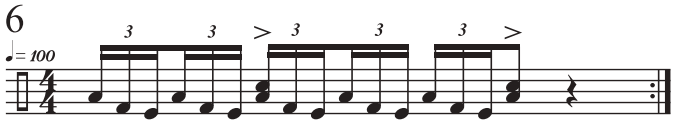


"Tommy The Cat"

The opening two-bar drum fill of this song demonstrates how accents, ghost notes, drags, and flams can elevate a simple idea into something special. Tim accelerates the tempo as the fill moves along so that things are jumping when he kicks into his funk groove. (0:00)

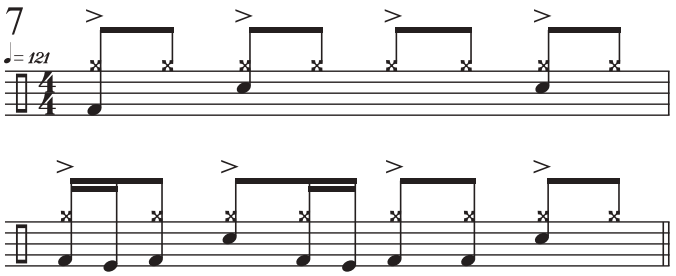
"My Name Is Mud"

One of Primus's most famous tunes hangs on Claypool's triplet bass lick. After providing straightforward beat support with a few accents thrown in, Alexander finally plays along with the pattern for the climax of the song. The depth of his low tom (which is actually a gong bass) completes the triple-bass effect. (4:11)



"DMV"

Tim's use of space in the first measure of this verse groove enhances the impact of his double bass pattern in bar two. (0:20)

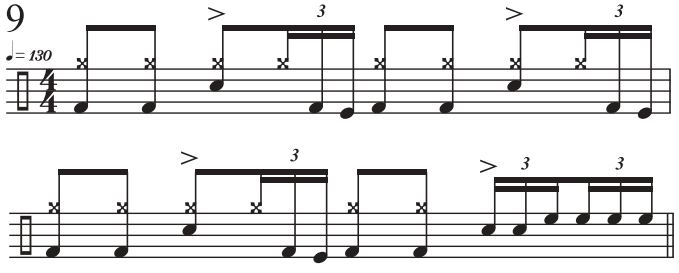


"Over The Electric Grapevine"

For this track, Alexander applies a tom-laden, almost tribal approach. His drumbeat under Larry LaLonde's guitar solo, with offbeat cymbals mixed into the tom work, is an example of Tim's fluent creativity. (2:24)

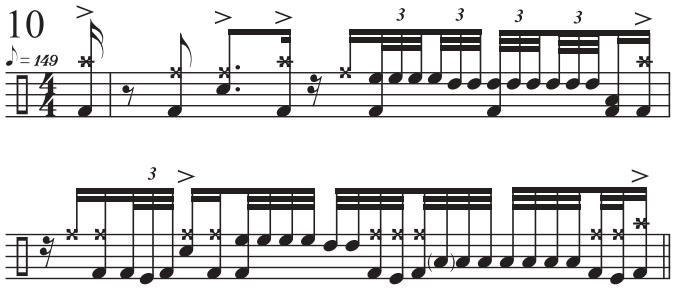
"Wynona's Big Brown Beaver"

Tim's flashy double bass triplets pump energy into the groove of this song. Occasional fills burst out of the beat to add excitement. (0:20)



"Southbound Pachyderm"

The end of this cut finds Alexander going a little nuts with Neil Peart–inspired licks. Note the smooth integration of double kick and ride cymbal into the sweeping tom fill at the end of this sequence. (4:55)

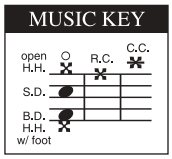


You can contact **Ed Breckenfeld** through his Web site: www.edbreckenfeld.com.

Style & Analysis

The Jazz Drumming Of Steve Gadd

by Eric Novod



While it's unlikely that anyone would declare that Steve Gadd is an underrated or underrepresented force in modern drumming, it's mostly high-profile rock and fusion gigs that have solidified his reputation in the music business. However, it's on his frequently overlooked straight-ahead jazz recordings where you can find some of Gadd's most tasteful and original drumming.

Veryl Oakland

Early Influences

Some of Steve Gadd's earliest influences were jazz drummers. As he states in his instructional book *Up Close*, "the people who influenced me in terms of jazz were Art Blakey, Max Roach, Jack Franklin—who used to play drums with Kai Winding's band—Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and Chick Corea."

The jazz masters Gadd listed are very different from one another, but he was absorbing different elements from each of them. Tony Williams' influence is the most prominent in Steve's early playing. But the power of Blakey, the melodic concepts of Roach, and the polyrhythmic choices of Elvin are also prevalent.

Jack Franklin and Chick Corea are Gadd's surprise influences. Franklin is a clean, sensitive drummer who plays very tastefully, so Gadd's concept of choosing what notes *not* to play may be linked to him. To understand the connection to Chick Corea, listen to "Confirmation" from the pianist's *Three Quartets* album. On that track, Chick plays a duet (on drums) with saxophonist Michael Brecker, displaying his interest in the drumming of Tony Williams.

Chick shared a lot of his Tony-inspired drumming ideas with Gadd. This collaboration was a vital component in Steve's development. He soon adopted some of Tony's philosophies (breaking up the time, doubling the hands and feet, and removing notes from the swing pattern) and combined them with his other influences to create his own style.

Another influence on Gadd was his early playing experience with organ trios. While associated with jazz, organ trio drumming was a unique musical experience. According to Gadd, "When I was young, my tendency was to approach everything very technically, but with organ groups the groove was so strong that it didn't make any sense to do anything to get in the way."

The Quarter-Note Ride

At first, combining influences from Tony Williams and minimalist organ trio drummers may seem illogical, as Tony often played a lot of notes with Miles Davis. But as successful studio bass player and frequent Gadd collaborator Abe Laboriel remembers, "Steve said that he's aware that he plays more 'attacks' per bar than anyone else in the band. So when all of those attacks aren't there, suddenly what everybody else is doing becomes very critical and really exposed." As a result, Gadd often removes everything from the traditional swing pattern but quarter notes when playing straight-ahead jazz.

A quarter-note feel is a common approach that many drummers have used over the years. Listen to Miles Davis albums like *Miles Smiles* (with Tony Williams) or *Kind Of Blue* (with Jimmy Cobb) for examples of this minimalist style. However, most drummers remain tied to the traditional swing pattern and use the quarter-note pulse as an effect. Gadd adopted this technique as his main approach to playing straight-ahead jazz.

"Old Devil Moon"
Milt Jackson, *Goodbye*, 1973

This track was one of Gadd's first straight-ahead sessions. Notice that even early in his career, Steve was stripping away the usual swing pattern and playing quarter-note time. Gadd adds the swing pattern to the quarter-note foundation every so often to provide intensity as the chorus progresses.

When Gadd adds 8ths and 16ths to his groove, there's a strong sense of swing, because they had not been forced on the listener from the start. Playing in this way gives the soloist free rein to decide where to go rhythmically, and it gives the other rhythm-section players a chance to dictate the feel.

This early recording also displays the influence of Tony Williams, notably Tony's idea of doubling the ride cymbal with the hi-hat. While Williams does this to be able to play more with his hands, Gadd uses the concept to accentuate his "less is more" groove.

A tremendous amount of four-way independence is required to execute this seemingly simple drumming style. Throughout this tune, the right hand (ride cymbal) and left foot (hi-hat) play quarter notes, while the left hand (snare) and right foot (bass drum) are adding syncopations. Check out how Gadd stresses beat 4 with the snare drum in the first four measures, and then intro-

duces swung 8ths on beats 3 and 4 on the snare or ride (measures 8, 12, 14, and 18).

By measures 23 and 24, the chorus is building momentum, and so is Gadd's output. The broken triplets between the ride, hi-hat, and snare that first appear in measure 24 are staples of Gadd's swing playing. They reoccur in measures 36–37 and 40–44. (3:44)

"Rock Skippin"
Jim Hall, *Concierto*, 1975

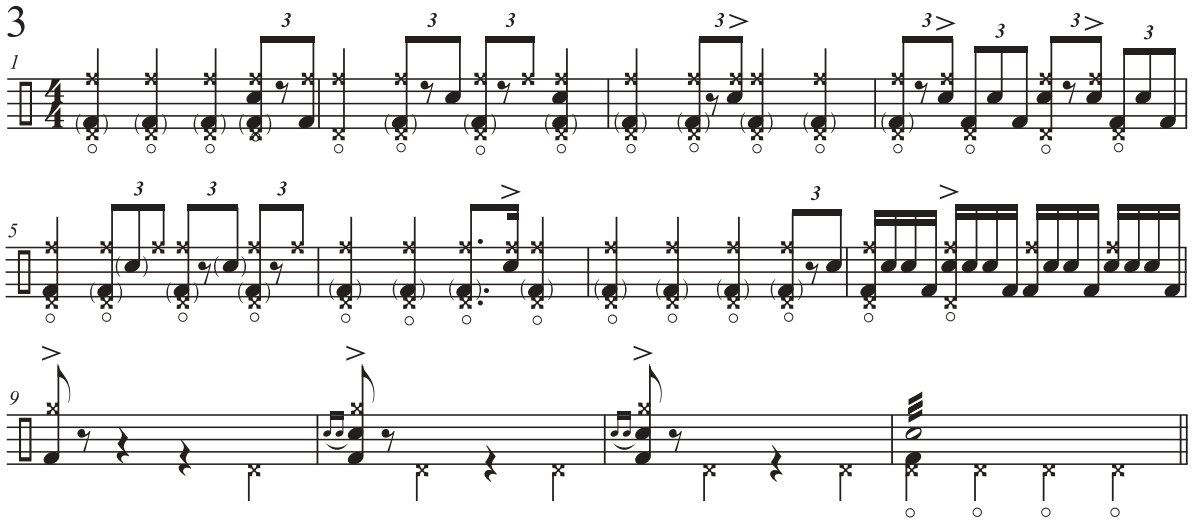
The first twenty measures of this tune feature Gadd on brushes. However, as soon as he moves to sticks, the quarter-note groove reappears, followed by an open/closed hi-hat pattern.

In the next section (Example 2), Gadd plays the traditional swing pattern, except this time he's breaking up the quarter notes between the ride cymbal (beat 1 and 3) and his hi-hat foot (beat 2 and 4). Even though he's playing the traditional swing pattern, Gadd still stresses the quarter-note pulse by omitting the ride cymbal on beats 2 and 4. (1:10)

"Basically Blues"
Buddy Rich Big Band, *Burning For Buddy*, Vol. Two, 1997

This tune is perhaps the strongest representation of Gadd's straight-ahead style. The introduction chorus features quarter-note time, with the hi-hat gradually entering on beats 2 and 4. The next four choruses also feature strong quarter-note time, with a few bass drum ghost notes added on the "&" of beat 4 and a couple of fills that help push the music forward.

The fifth chorus displays a slight variation on a Gadd theme. This time he's playing quarters on an open hi-hat, the ride, and the bass drum. After a triplet fill between the snare and an open hi-hat / bass drum combination (measure 4), Gadd returns to quarter notes in order to set up the only 16th-note fill in this article (measure 8). The final four measures feature a brief stop-time section that leads to a saxophone solo. (2:00)



A comprehensive style and analysis of Steve Gadd's jazz drumming would need to include many more transcriptions in order to cover all of the developments in his style. However, from these examples, the essence of Steve's straight-ahead jazz playing can be absorbed. Although his jazz output does not compare to those of the greats of the genre, his unique approach should secure his reputation not only as a rock/fusion pioneer, but as an important influence in modern jazz.

Evens Can Sound Odd

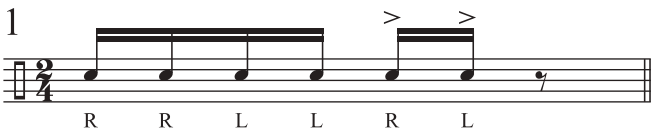
4+6+8 Combinations

by John Riley

Rudiments form the foundation of drumming. Many jazz drummers have adapted the rudiments for use on the drumset, creating endless varieties of effective and exciting phrases. Philly Joe Jones was one of the most dedicated and adept rudimental practitioners. This month, we're going to take a look at a few ways that Philly Joe and other jazz masters use basic four-, six-, and eight-stroke rolls to create hip solo phrases.

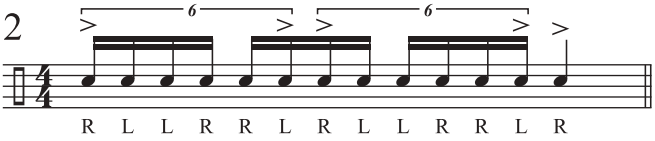
The traditional six-stroke roll is played like this.

1



Jazz drummers often re-order the sticking like this.

2

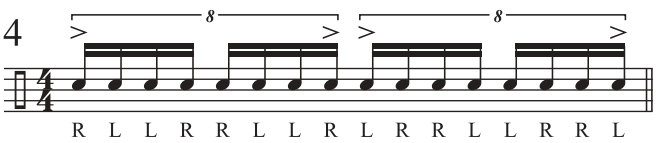


The less frequently used eight-stroke roll is traditionally played like Example 3. (Think of the eight-stroke roll as a six with an added double.)

3

Here's how many jazz drummers play it.

4

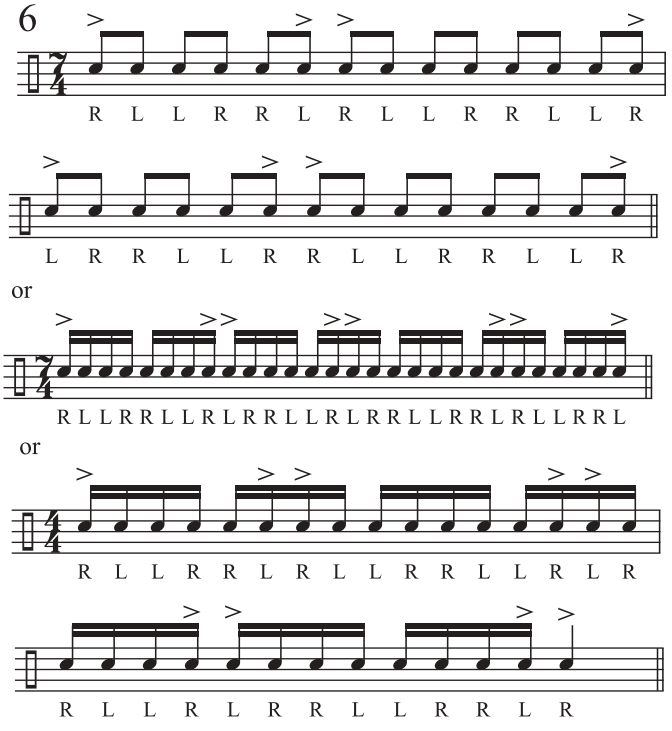


Drumset players favor these sticking combinations because the interior double strokes aid in generating a flowing, less muscular sound. Philly Joe created a hip accent pattern when he sequenced the six- and eight-stroke rolls like in Example 5.

5

Playing consecutive sixes and eights creates the feeling of repeated seven-beat phrases, and flips the sticking in an interesting way.

6

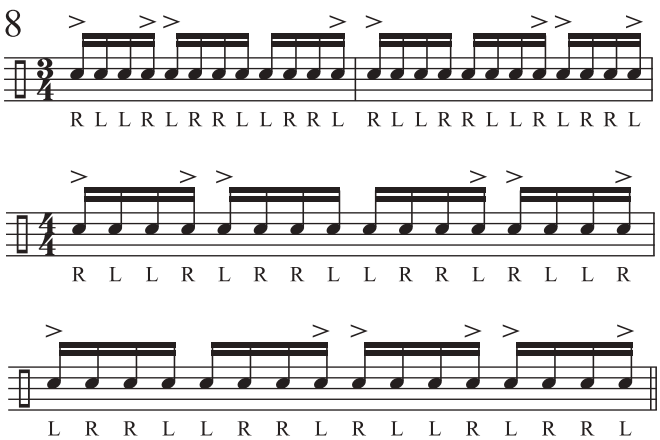


Another useful sticking is a six-stroke minus a double. It's really just an inverted paradiddle, but for consistency's sake, let's call it a four-stroke roll.

7

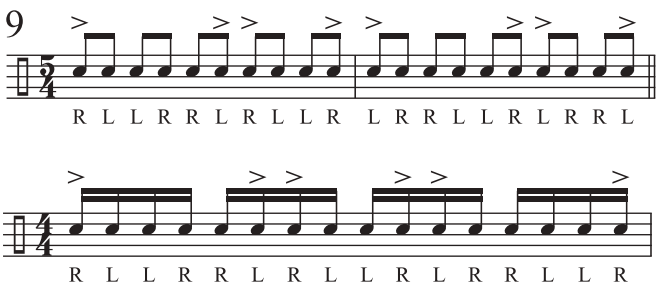
Combinations of four and eight work well in 3/4 and 4/4.

8



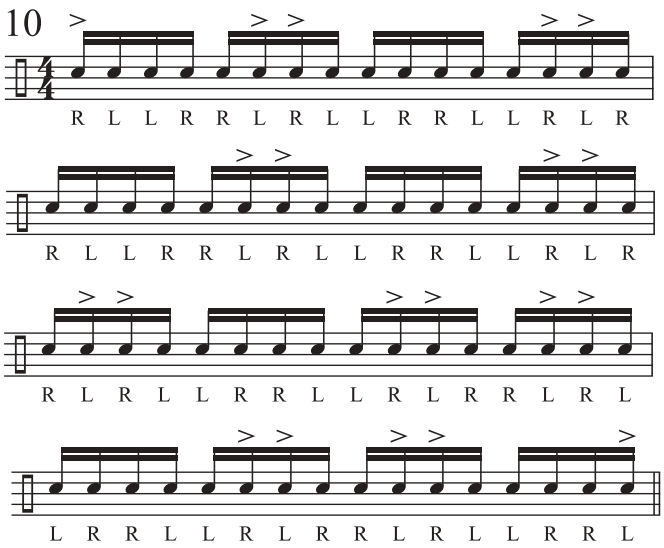
Combinations of four and six work well in 5/4 and 4/4.

9



Finally, here's a phrase that employs fours, sixes, and eights.

10



Practice all of these combinations slowly with a metronome, and make the accents pop out. As you gradually increase the tempo, maintain a relaxed flow and legato sound.

Next time we'll explore other uses for these drumset rudiments.

John Riley's career has included work with such artists as John Scofield, Mike Stern, Woody Herman, and Stan Getz. He has also written the critically acclaimed books *The Art Of Bop Drumming* and *Beyond Bop Drumming*, published by Manhattan Music. His latest book, *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop*, was recently released by Modern Drummer Publications.

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Playing With Drum Loops

The DJ Dropout

by Donny Gruendler

MUSIC KEY
H.H.
S.D.
B.D.

In addition to honing their chops, successful working drummers have always focused on musical issues such as touch, time, feel, and stylistic diversity. In today's musical climate, another skill has to be added to a drummer's "must have" list: playing to samples and backing tracks.

The following exercises are designed to help you get used to drumming over prerecorded music, while also introducing another common technique in contemporary commercial music: the DJ dropout.

Background

One of my first inspirations when I began playing with drum loops, samples, and backing tracks was DJ Shadow's album *Endtroducing*. This powerful recording was entirely conceived on an Akai MPC60 sampling/sequencing drum machine (pre-Pro Tools), and it's comprised of chopped vinyl samples, break beats, and loop fragments. On each song, synthetic drum tracks stutter, stop, seemingly disappear, and then reappear in unusual ways. I'd never heard music or drumming like this before, so I was very intrigued by the tactics and techniques that were being employed by the record-spinning DJ.

As I continued to study this disc (and many other DJ-based recordings), my ears grew accustomed to these new textures. I also discovered that these chopped samples and jaggedly placed grooves had infiltrated many mainstream commercial recordings, like Justin Timberlake's *Justified*, Beyoncé's *Dangerously In Love*, Sheryl Crow's *C'Mon C'Mon C'Mon*, and Linkin Park's *Hybrid Theory*. As a result, I had to figure out a way to emulate these new sounds on many of my Top-40 gigs in Los Angeles.

In this article, I'm going to share some of my approaches, practice routines, and supplemental exercises for effectively integrating the DJ dropout into your acoustic drum performances.

The Dropout Concept

Dropouts are created in the DJ culture by pressing the mute button on a mixing console while a drumbeat is playing. This silences the entire groove in order to highlight a particular element in the composition, such as a vocal line, lead melody, or sound effect. When the mute button is pressed again, the groove returns as if it never had been stopped.

To demonstrate this concept, listen to a CD on your stereo system. As the music is playing, quickly turn down the volume knob for approximately one second. Then quickly turn it up again. Do you hear how the music is playing as if it had never been turned down? It's playing exactly where it left off. That's what's known as a mute—or a dropout.

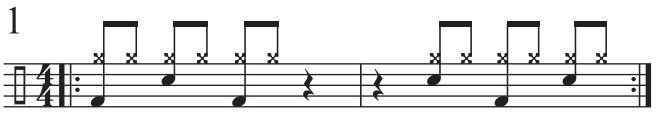
Dropout Exercises

From a drummer's standpoint, dropouts often occur in odd places in the beat. For instance, instead of always cutting out on beat 1, dropouts can happen at any time and return at any point in the groove.

The following exercises will help you develop the proper thought process for performing dropouts like a DJ, beat maker, or producer. Before you get started, here are three things to keep in mind that'll help you sound more authentic.

Thought 1: To give the illusion of being muted, when you drop out of a groove, it's extremely important to silence *all* sound prior to the downbeat.

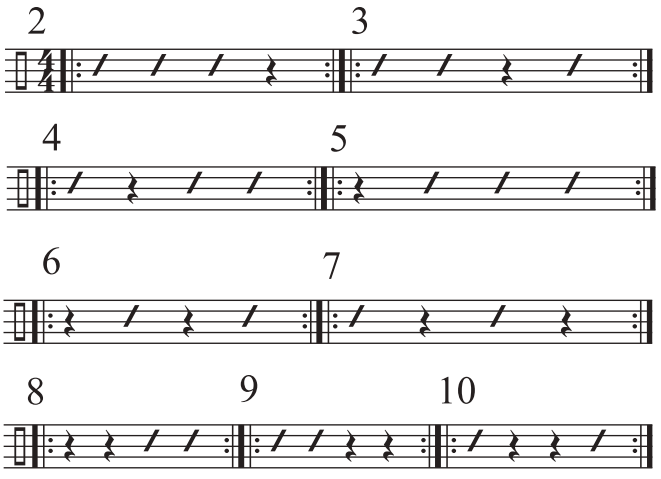
Thought 2: When you resume the groove, you must start at the exact return point within the pattern. For example, if you were to drop out on the "&" of beat 3 and then return on beat 2 of the next measure, it would be played like this.



Thought 3: As drummers, we've been brainwashed to always play a cymbal crash when heading into a new section of a song. To effectively emulate a DJ, you must resist that temptation. Don't play an accent or cymbal crash when you return into the groove.

One-Measure Dropout Exercises

Here are nine exercises that we'll be using to work on our dropouts. (Slash marks = time, rests = dropouts)



Here's how to work through the exercises.

1. Pick a one-measure dropout exercise.

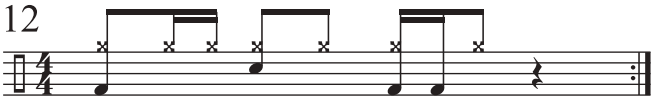
2. Choose a drum loop to play over, like Rock Loop Track 2 (downloadable at www.moderndrummer.com), shown in Example 11.

11

3. Play the groove during the slash marks and then drop out during the quarter-note rest. (Remember that the loop will be playing through the rest.)

Using the dropout in Example 2 with Rock Loop Track 2, we have this.

12



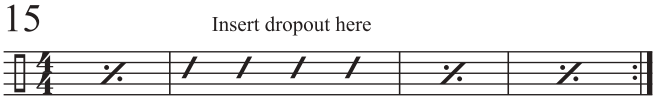
Dropout Practice Methods

Once you've mastered the previous exercises, try putting them into four-bar phrases. In Examples 13–16, insert any one of the dropout exercises where notated.

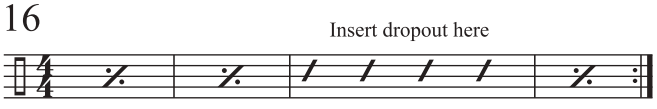
13

14

15

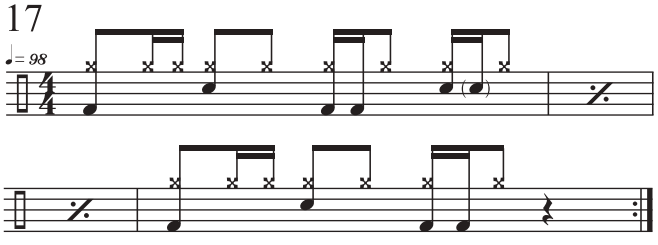


16



Here's what it would look like using the dropout in Example 2, Rock Loop Track 2, and the practice method in Example 13.

17



One Step Further

You can download more loops at www.moderndrummer.com for additional practice. Please use them to repeat the above process for whichever dropout exercise and practice method you choose.

Also, keep in mind that you're not restricted to using this dropout technique when playing with a loop. You can also use these approaches when you're playing with a click track, sequenced backing tracks, or by yourself. These concepts can serve your drumming in a wide variety of contexts. Enjoy!

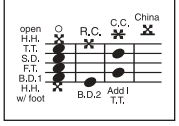
Donny Gruendler is a professional drummer, a Musicians Institute faculty member in Los Angeles, and the author of Carl Fischer's *Playing With Drum Loops—How To Work With Drum Loops, Samples, And Backing Tracks*. You may contact Donny at donny@donnygruendler.com.

Vinnie Colaiuta

"I'm Tweeked/Attack Of The 20lb. Pizza"

transcribed by Anthony Giles

MUSIC KEY



This song is the first track from Vinnie Colaiuta's self-titled solo CD, which was released in 1994. Playing through this transcription is sure to give you a renewed appreciation for Vinnie's genius. Not only does he play extremely difficult material, but he also plays with a great sense of time and musicality.

B
41
1
2
46
50
54
L R L
58
62
3
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6
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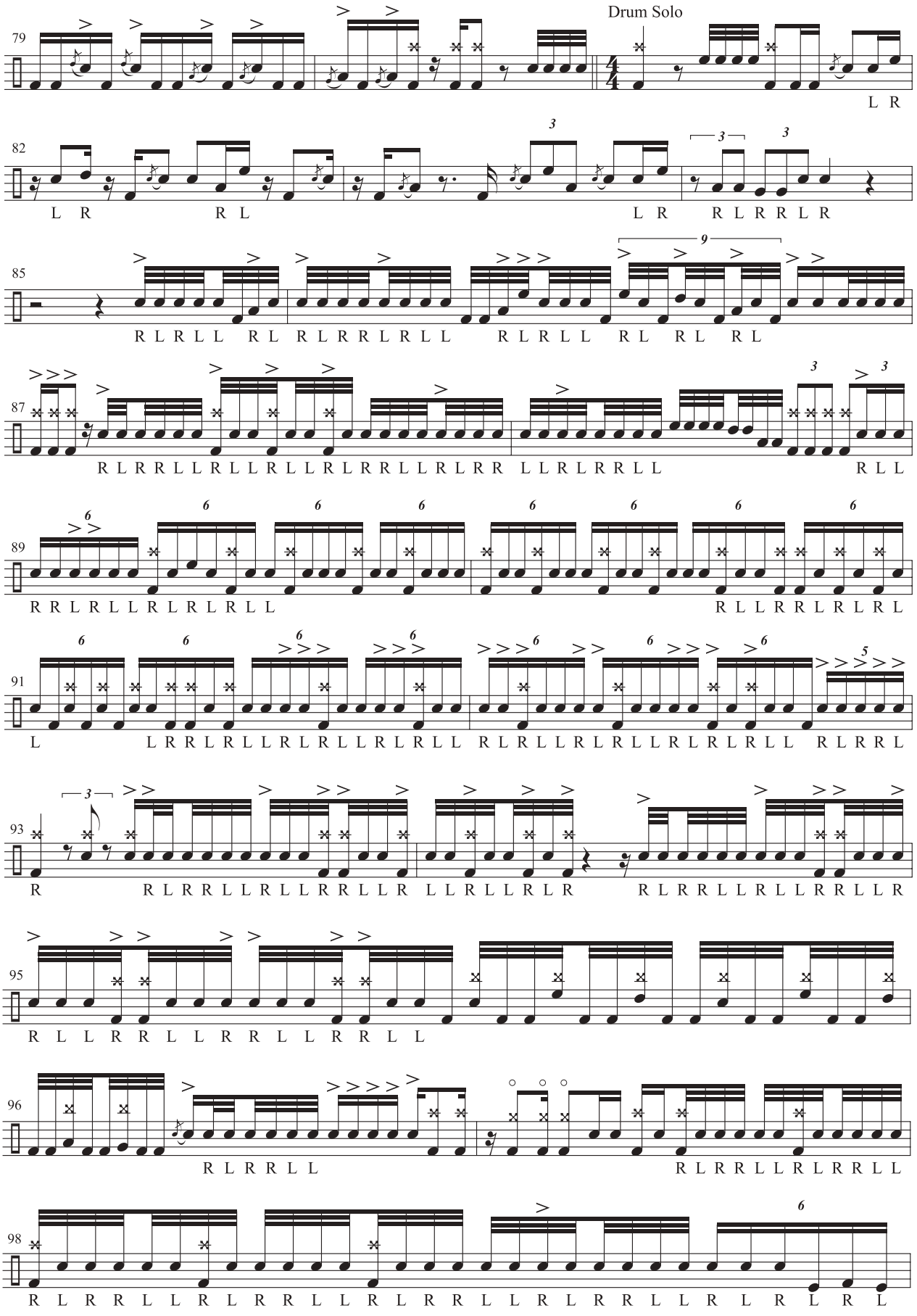
73
76
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R
R L R L L R L R L R

Vinnie Colaiuta



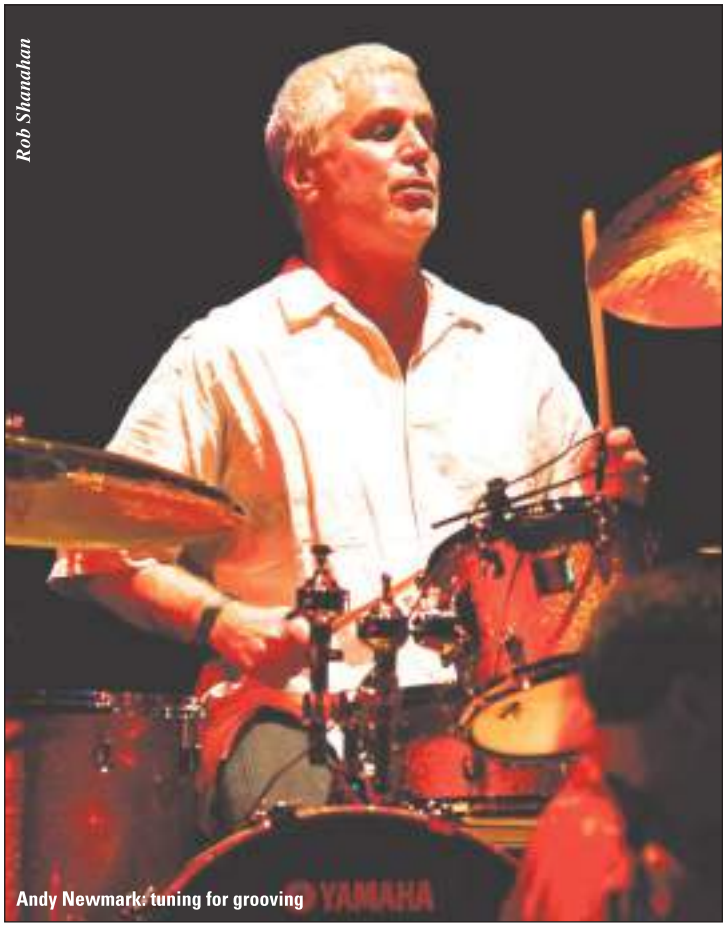
To hear this track, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

Developing Your Own Sound

Tips From Three Greats

by David Stanoch, with Andy Newmark

Developing your own sound can be complicated. The type of music you play can influence your choice of drums, cymbals, drumheads, and even sticks. In preparing to gig, "What tools do I need in order to perform to the best of my abilities?" becomes an important question. Your budget naturally influences the quality of instruments you can afford (though you needn't have the highest-priced gear available in order to get a good sound). Your touch, experience, and musical taste are also important factors. And yet I often encounter students who don't approach their choices with these concepts in mind.



Andy Newmark: tuning for grooving

Andy's Approach

In February 1984, I read a *Modern Drummer* article by session master Andy Newmark, who's known for his work with Sly & The Family Stone, John Lennon, Carly Simon, and many other musical greats. The article was titled "Andy Talks About His Drumset." I was impressed with how articulate Andy was about projecting his sound. His words reflected the same conviction he shows in his playing. Andy's article influenced the development of my own sound concepts then, and I share it with my students now. Let's revisit Andy's article for insights that are as useful today as when they were originally presented.

A Four-Piece Kit

"A four-piece drumset tends to make me more groove-conscious," Andy began. "Not having too many other options around me keeps my approach more groove-oriented. Pop music is the same three or four chords over and over again, and the challenge is to find a new way to play those chords and get something new out of them. It's the same idea with getting the most out of a little drumset as opposed to having lots of drums."

About his drums, Andy continued, "A big part of my sound is the bass drum. I want a bass drum 'thump' that hits me in my gut. I play a Yamaha kit with a 24" bass drum, and I have a very heavy foot. I tune the drum as low as I can before the heads start to wrinkle, then I'll go up half a turn on each lug to take it out of that area. The drum has no pitch at all, because I have a blanket inside.

"When I play live, I tune the snare drum real tight, and 99% of the time I hit a rimshot because that gives me a lot more volume and cuts through anything. In the studio, I tune it way down and usually put a little piece of tape on the side just to take some of the ring out.

"I have an 8x12 rack tom and a 16x16 floor tom. I tune the floor tom to the lowest possible note before the sound starts to distort from being too loose. With the rack tom, I look for the note that will ring the longest. That's usually not its lowest note and certainly not its highest note. I don't put any muffling on the toms. I like them to be very natural and have their own decay."

When speaking of cymbals, Andy said, "I use one 20" ride cymbal and two crashes, which could be any combination of 16", 17", and 18", depending on the music I'm playing. The hi-hats are 13" Zildjian New Beats. All of my cymbals are high-pitched. The crashes are all bright, and they die away very quickly—a quick explosion and they're gone. The small hi-hats give me a high-pitched 'tick.'

"I don't use the ride cymbal a lot, because there's much more definition in the hi-hat when it comes to keeping a rhythm section locked in. If I do play the ride cymbal, I very rarely play in the middle or on the edge. I always play on the bell, because it cuts through.

"There's nothing in the middle in my drumset," Andy con-

What matters is understanding the musical environment you're in, and experimenting within that environment to find a comfort level for your own self-expression.

cluded. "It's either super-low or super-high. The bass drum and the floor tom are like volcanoes. The high tom is like a timbale. The snare is a high-pitched crack, and all my cymbals are high, quick explosions. Every note on the kit is consciously designed to have an impact. Everything cuts through the band."

In that 1984 article, Andy clearly defined a concept of sound and setup that was an expression of *his* attitude. Andy comes from a background of funk-influenced rock drumming, often working in an environment of heavy amplification and large venues. His choices make sense for expressing himself comfortably in that environment. Remember that individual expression should also weigh into making choices that work for you. You needn't imitate Andy to successfully develop a sound concept of your own.

Jeff's Jazz Approach

Consider another point of view. When I asked jazz drumming great Jeff Hamilton how he selects cymbals that work well with small groups as well as larger orchestras, he responded, "The ride cymbal should blend well with either large or small groups, without being 'ping-like.' I'm not a fan of cymbals that cut through the band. After all, we're supposed to be playing music *with* other musicians, not 'cutting through' them."

Jeff obviously has a sound conception quite different from Andy's. Keep in mind, however, that Jeff generally works in acoustic music environments that include very soft dynamic levels as well as louder ones, usually without much extra amplification.

In Jeff's approach, all the drums are gen-

Jeff Hamilton: blending, not cutting

Alex Solca

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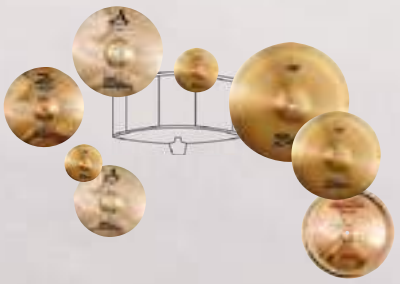


15" A Custom Mastersound HiHats

8" A Splash

19" Z Custom Thrash Ride

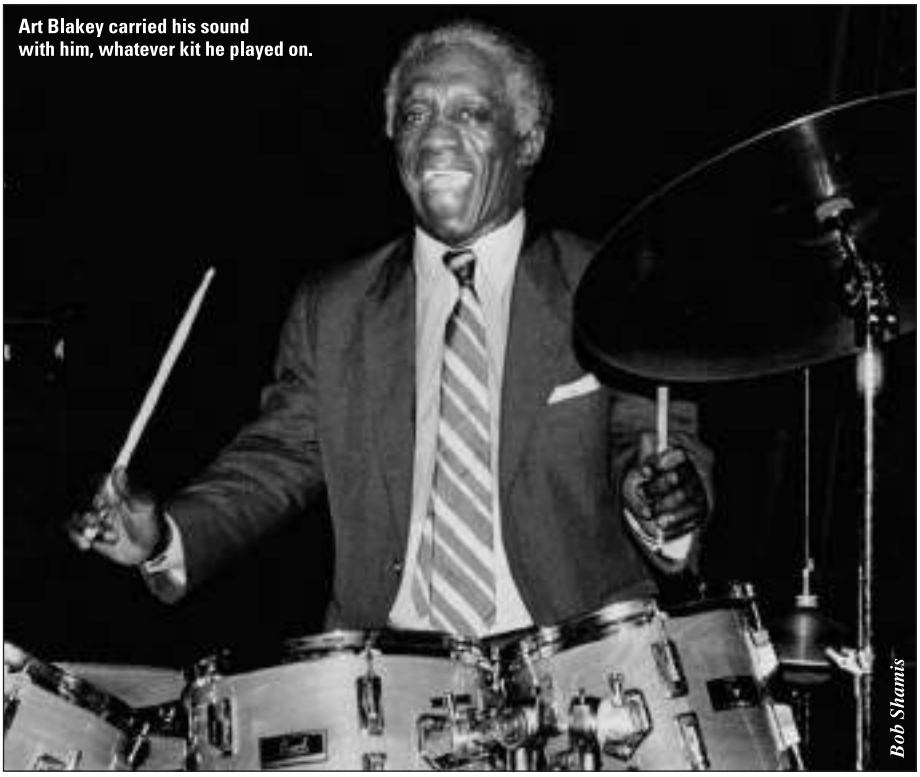
20" A Custom Projection Crash

10" A Splash

24" A Medium Ride

20" A Medium Thin Crash

20" Oriental China Trash


Art Blakey carried his sound with him, whatever kit he played on.

Bob Shamis

erally wide open and unmuffled, producing more overtones. The bass drum has both heads intact, with little, if any, muffling inside. The cymbals are large, thin, dark, and low in pitch. Some contain rivets, increasing the decay and warming the overall sound. The mid-range is incorporated into the total sound, with the brass and wood in the drumset blending with brass and wood in the band. A lighter touch and feel is characteristic of the musical style. In Jeff's hands (and feet), the effect is masterful and inviting.

A Musical Difference

Andy Newmark and Jeff Hamilton employ different concepts with their drumkit setups. You might employ yet another. What matters is understanding the musical environment you're in and experimenting within that environment to find a comfort level for your own self-expression. And remember to balance that with what the musicians you're playing with also need and like.

With that in mind, Andy Newmark says today, "My position has softened a bit since that 1984 article. It's not such a radical, all-or-nothing kind of thing. Let's just say I'm a little more open to more flavors and colors now, and to a broader dynamic range."

Andy also embraces Jeff Hamilton's remarks, "Especially where Jeff said we're meant to be playing *with* other musicians," he adds. "I totally understand where he's coming from." It's enlightening to realize that even an accomplished artist like Andy Newmark is continuously evolving.

A Tip From A Legend

Your own evolution will continue as you develop your musical touch, feel, and taste. I once asked jazz legend Art Blakey if it was difficult to play on drumsets other than his own, as he often did when touring. He looked me in the eye, tapped his chest, and proclaimed, "*I* am the instrument."

Art's musical conception and personality were so strong and confident that he could transcend the limitations of any drumset provided for him in order to sound like Art Blakey. That sort of indisputable musical identity is the ultimate goal in developing your own sound.

Take It From Here

What kind of sound do you want? Use the examples presented here as a reference. Experiment. Listen. The insights of Newmark, Hamilton, and Blakey inspired me to develop my personal self-expression in instrumental sound. Your answer is already inside you. Nurture it and watch it evolve on your drumset. Enjoy the journey.

Fast Forward.

photography by Andrew Lepley

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Jack Irons

The Passage Of Time

by Adam Budofsky

Drummers always have time on their minds. And that makes sense, right? It comes with the territory—"the drummer is the timekeeper," and all that.

These days Jack Irons, who has toured and recorded seminal albums with The Red Hot Chili Peppers and Pearl Jam, has an intimate relationship with the concept, and is always dealing with it on a number of levels. "I've recently decided to take the pressure off myself to have time limits," he insists. "If I accomplish something that truly means something to me, and it takes this many years...then so be it. I've decided to let myself be moved as an artist with my own music, and not think commercially.

"In terms of rock music, I would like to play with a band again. But," Irons adds with a laugh, "it is nice to sleep when I am tired and eat when I need to. Maybe enjoy some peace and quiet. In the past, not doing those things wasn't easy for me."

Danai Irons

Indeed, family demands are often what cause professional musicians to reevaluate their art, their career, and their priorities. In Jack Irons' case, at this point in his life developing his reputation as a solo artist, and learning as much as he can about the craft of studio recording, are the paths to naturally follow. In recent years Jack has spent countless hours building a studio in his home. The first major result of this journey was his album *Attention Dimension*, a sprawling, at times awesome collection of tunes that reveal a player of great imagination, drive, and most obviously, musicality.

As good as it is, Irons says he's learned much since that recording, and fans are anxious to hear what he comes up with next. "In time...in time," would likely be Jack's response to those looking for his sophomore album's release date. For now, this particular drummer is content to work strictly in the moment, taking the time to learn what sounds and methods work best. Recently Jack cheerfully chatted with *Modern Drummer*, over several sessions, about the topic most important to us drummers: time, in its many forms. Here's a sampling of Irons' thoughts on the subject.

"When I get my studio fired up, and I'm getting sounds the way I like, I play better, rather than if I was spending time playing this beat over and over again and somehow thinking it's going to *get* better. There's a big difference between the way my body operates now at forty-three and how it did when I was young. With my son, who plays guitar, I can see where repetition really speaks loudly. But now for me it's stretching my musical mind that turns on my whole machine. I learn and grow differently now.

"Over the years I've been lucky to work pretty intimately with certain players, and we got to work together for a long time. So we could kind of develop our time together. The feel we had came from everyone's internal sense, but also from gelling together.

"Confidence is certainly a factor in developing good time. But the ability to develop listening abilities, and really know what that means, is something I'm always trying to get better at. The better listener I am, the better time I have.

When you're playing with a click track, you have to get into a combination of the click and the music that's coming at you. I think that with the drummers who play well with a click, it's not that they play perfectly with it the whole time. But if they stray a little, they know how to smoothly come back in.

"If you're listening to a click, and that thing is beating out the time and bugging the crap out of you…I mean, how much love can you put into a performance?"

"There are great studio players who can play along to a click and you'd never know it. But if you're a rock guy listening to a click, and that thing is beating out the time and bugging the crap out of you…I mean, how much love can you put into a performance? Ultimately I think it's a better experience for a drummer to listen to musicians playing than to a click. I'm not anti–click track, and some music that uses machines is really important to people. What I'm talking about here is *rock* bands—guys in a room really working to get the music to higher places. And to me, great rock music is about interaction. If it's pushing and pulling a certain way, and everybody's doing it together, it's magical.

"I read that David Briggs, Neil Young's producer on many great albums, had an approach to recording a band where he just made sure everyone was in the same room together, they didn't use headphones, they played through a P.A., and he just miked everything up. It was about the overall picture. His approach was that you were supposed to be capturing what's happening among the musicians. And if the musicians are happiest, and their environment allows them to be free in their expression, then you're going to get their best performance—and that includes good time.

"Does the use of electronics allow you to make music more quickly? Yes, certainly. Does it result in better art? My opinion is no, it doesn't. I think you have to take your time with things. But I understand that's a luxury today. Everybody is on tighter schedules. There are definitely certain forces at work. People just have to decide how they want to make their own music, and stand by that.

"The drummer is supposed to provide the sense of time and pulse; it's tremendously important. If you have a guy who can only play three beats, but he can play them well, with good time, he's going to make better music than the guy who can do all these technical things but doesn't have a good sense of time."

Jazz Producer, Bandleader, And Composer

Delfeayo Marsalis

Speaks His Mind

by Michael Dawson

Trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis bears a strong musical pedigree. His father, celebrated pianist Ellis Marsalis, has played with jazz masters like drummer Ed Blackwell, saxophonist Cannonball Adderley, and trumpeter Al Hirt. Delfeayo's two older brothers, saxophonist Branford and trumpeter Wynton, have each made an immeasurable impact on modern jazz since arriving on the scene in the late '70s as a part of Art Blakey's legendary Jazz Messengers. And the youngest Marsalis, Jason, is one of the finest drummers working today.

While Delfeayo may not have the public profile of his older siblings, his involvement in jazz over the past twenty years has been no less significant. In the '80s, he honed his chops while touring with Art Blakey, Max Roach, and Elvin Jones. Delfeayo's lastest release, *Minions Dominion*, is a hard-swinging set of original compositions featuring Elvin on one of his last studio sessions.

But Delfeayo's greatest contributions have been from behind the recording console. As a producer and engineer, Delfeayo is responsible for capturing his brothers' warm, pure sound on many of their albums. He's also worked with other acclaimed artists like pianist/singer Harry Connick Jr., trumpeter Nicholas Payton, and pianist Marcus Roberts.

We caught up with Delfeayo while he was touring the US with his own band. He shared his perspective on what the drums are all about, both on stage and in the studio.

Delfeayo's Drummers

Delfeayo has played with and/or produced drummers including:

Brian Blade
Art Blakey
Jimmy Cobb
Al Foster
Elvin Jones
Jason Marsalis
Lewis Nash
Max Roach
Ed Shaughnessy
Marvin "Smitty" Smith
Jeff "Tain" Watts
Tony Williams

Playing With The Greats

MD: You've had a chance to play with many great drummers. Let's start with Art Blakey.

Delfeayo: I played with Art for a month in '87. His hearing was gone, so he was playing at a very strong volume. But he had a great understanding of solo development. He would basically dictate to the soloist. He'd start you down low and build it up. Then when it was time for you to finish, he'd hit the crash and it was like, "Okay…next!"

MD: What did you get out of playing with Elvin Jones?

Delfeayo: Elvin despised soloists that didn't keep good time. The complex rhythms that he played would only work if the soloist had very strong time. To Elvin, it didn't matter if you played a complex solo or a simple one. The main thing was to keep the flow, make some kind of statement, and *never* mess up the time.

I also learned from Elvin to relax and let the music come to you. When

Tips From Delfeayo

1. No amps or headphones in the studio.
2. Tune your drums higher for recording.
3. Listen more, solo less.
4. Love the music.

"Jimmy Cobb was the first drummer to ask me whether I liked a cymbal or not. The older guys were more concerned with accompanying and accommodating."

you're young, the tendency is to try to force the music. That's the difference between today's young musicians and the young musicians of the '50s and '60s. Those guys learned at an early age to let the music come to them.

MD: What about Max Roach?

Delfeayo: Max didn't dictate the development of the solo as much. He just gave you a nice bed to develop your thing on top of. But all of the older drummers gave you that big crash when you finished your solo.

MD: What are your thoughts about some of the drummers from your generation, like Jeff "Tain" Watts, Lewis Nash, Carl Allen, Ralph Peterson, and Marvin "Smitty" Smith?

Delfeayo: Those guys can play. In the '80s it was like, "It's not Elvin...It's not Blakey..." or "Those youngsters aren't what the older guys are." But these guys really love the music. And that's one of the greatest things a musician can do, above practicing and everything else.

MD: Who's your favorite of the younger generation of drummers?

Delfeayo: My brother Jason, because we've played together so long. Brian Blade is another guy who has that spirit and love for the music. And I've always loved Jeff "Tain" Watts, but I don't sound good playing with him, for whatever reason.

I also have to say something about Jimmy Cobb. I worked with him in the late '80s. He was the first drummer to ask me whether I liked a cymbal or not. I looked at him like he was crazy. [laughs] But the older guys were more concerned with accompanying and accommodating.

In The Studio

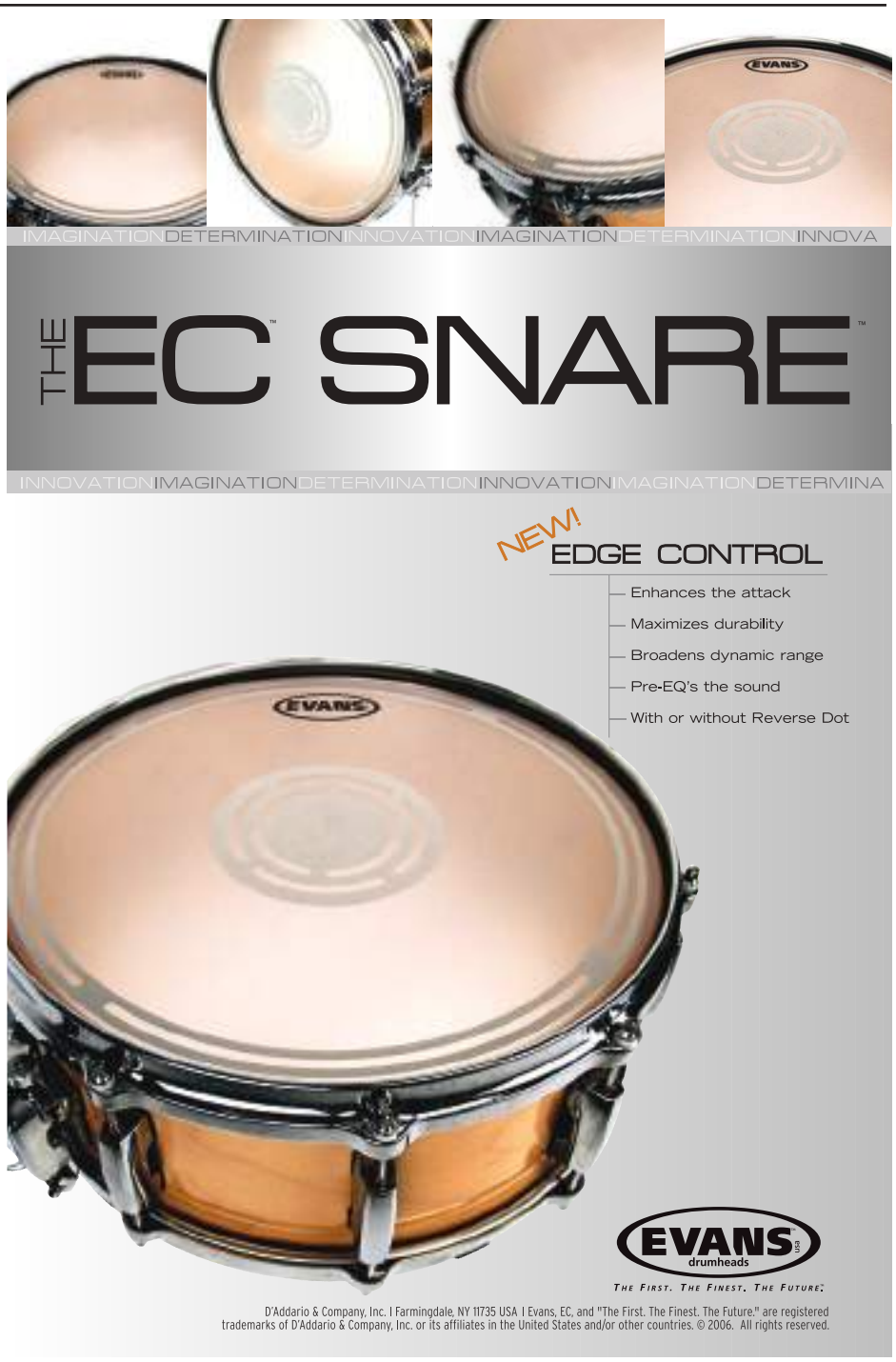
MD: You produced many of your brother Branford's records, including *Renaissance* with Tony Williams. How was that experience?

Delfeayo: When I heard Tony live with his band, he would just drown guys out. It didn't give the musicians a chance to relax. But in the studio, Tony played the drums like they're supposed to be played in a jazz band: at a nice volume, without blasting everybody away. And he kept that four-on-the-floor going all the time, even on fast tunes.

MD: You also did a record with Al Foster.

Delfeayo: That was the first one that I produced for Branford, *Royal Garden Blue*, in 1986. At that point, that was Al's best drum sound on record.

Al taught me something very interesting. He said, "Whenever I do a studio session, I



tune the drums up higher. It makes them cut a little more." So I'll occasionally ask drummers to tune their drums up a little higher.

MD: Do you spend a fair amount of time getting sounds?

Delfeayo: No. I just listen to how the drummer sounds. Then I set up the mics and go to work. We used to spend an hour doing soundcheck, but we don't do that now. If we spend thirty minutes, we're lucky.

MD: So you're relying on the drummer to get his or her sound together.

Delfeayo: I'm relying on the *group* to get their sound together. When Branford did *Random Abstract*, Lewis Nash wanted mics on all of the toms. His explanation was that when he plays these light, intricate rhythms on the toms, they're not heard. So we did it. But sometimes the drummer may have unreasonable expectations. If you're going to play something so it's inaudible, then maybe it should be that way—more like an effect. A lot of times it's just a textural thing that adds meat to the sound.

MD: What's your normal miking setup?

Delfeayo: In general I use two mics three to four feet above the cymbals, a mic that splits between the snare and the hi-hat, and a bass drum mic. But we've done a lot of different things. My dad did a trio record with Tain and Robert Hurt called *The Ellis Marsalis Trio*, which has a great sound. For that one, we mixed each song separately. On some of the songs the drums are panned to the left and the bass is to the right.

MD: Do you normally keep the drums panned to one side?

Delfeayo: We might go between hard left and eleven o'clock, or we'll go to noon. But sometimes I've found the best results by panning everything to the left. That works best for a small group because it leaves a big gap in the middle. It gives you more space and clarity, and things aren't fighting with each other. Plus, you hear a *drumset* sound, rather than individual drums.

MD: How do you know when you have a keeper take?

Delfeayo: The more you can play as you always play, the better your chances are. It's like the thing with Elvin: He just played the way he played. He didn't attempt to force anything. You have to get to a point where you're comfortable enough with your instrument and yourself to just let the music happen.

MD: Do you ever have to suggest that drummers modify their playing in the studio?

Delfeayo: A recording session is not really the time to do that kind of thing. You don't want to make a drummer self-conscious. But sometimes you can help. For example, I recently did a recording with Ed Shaughnessy. I had heard Ed before, and he was playing with enormous energy and drive. So I called him for a session. On the first day, he sounded great, but it wasn't the same level of intensity that I heard before. So at the end of the night, I called him. I think I pissed him off a little bit. But when he came in the next day...oh my Lord! There was the passion and energy. He just took over.

MD: How do you set up the studio when you're tracking?

Delfeayo: It varies. If we have a large room where the sound has a chance to

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travel, I'll keep everybody close together in a circle, which is something that Elvin said they did with Coltrane. I've found that even if you have a lot of leakage, the closer it is, the better it'll sound. When we did Branford's album *Trio Jeepy*, we had Milt Hilton face his bass into the corner of the room. Tain's drums were right next to him.

MD: What advice would you give to a jazz group going into the studio for the first time?

Delfeayo: I asked [famed jazz engineer] Rudy Van Gelder how he got that classic sound. He said that he didn't use amplification or headphones, and he recorded direct to two-track. So my advice is to do that. The difference will be astounding.

As A Leader

MD: What do you look for in a drummer for your own band?

Delfeayo: I like playing with my brother Jason because of his ability to make very musical decisions. So that's the primary thing: to make musical decisions and to play inside the context of the group. I also need somebody with a strong sense of time. But even if it rushes or drags a little bit, that's not as big a deal to me as someone who's off in his own zone on the bandstand.

It's also important to be respectful of how soloists want to tell their story. Elvin was always respectful of the soloist. It didn't matter who he was playing with, he would always adapt. Ultimately, the drummer's job is to make the soloist sound good.

MD: What do you like to hear behind your solos?

Delfeayo: I think of everything in terms of a story, like Blakey. You start off at the beginning, then climax, and then end. When you have that in each solo, and the song has that, and your set has that, it brings in the audience. And the drummer has to be in sync. The drummer needs to be aware of where I'm going, while also bringing something else to the table.

MD: Is there something you wish drummers did more or less of?

Delfeayo: There shouldn't be a lot of drum solos in a set. One is plenty. Weather Report used to give the drummer his own feature, but he wouldn't solo on any other song. It was a good break for the band, and it was good for the audience.

MD: What separates a good drummer from a great drummer?

Delfeayo: A great drummer is more proficient in more areas. The key elements are instrumental technique, musical expressiveness, playing in a band context, understanding solo development, originality/personality, and the ability to make good musical decisions. A good drummer may have two or three of those. A *great* drummer will have all six.

To hear Delfeayo's new album, *Minions Dominion*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

Drumming And Running

Your Feet Aren't Just For Playing Pedals

by Jeremy Hummel

Drummers play the most aerobically demanding instrument there is. Whether a performance consists of an intense ninety minutes of rock or three sets of jazz, we must have a certain level of endurance.

A few years ago, I returned from a vacation in Mexico. Upon viewing the vacation photos, I realized that I'd become somewhat out of shape. I was about to spend the next two months in Los Angeles making a record, so I decided it was the perfect time to get active again.

Running has always been one of the best (and most inexpensive) ways to get in shape. So I started doing a few laps around the block, usually topping out at around ten to fifteen minutes. As the days and weeks went by, the extra baggage really started to come off. Since then, I've become an avid runner, including competing in 5K, 8K, and 10K races.

Over the past few years I've come to realize that there are other benefits to running than just being in shape. I began noticing an interesting relationship between running and drumming. Other drummers I've met have made the same connection.

This article offers some of the benefits of running that I have discovered—along with insights from running/drumming comrades Daniel Adair of Nickelback and Mike Malinin of The Goo Goo Dolls. Hopefully some of these concepts will help you become not only a healthier person, but also a better performer and musician.

Illustration by Jeff Harrity

Getting Started

The other drummers I talked to about running got into it for the same reason I did: to get back in shape. Daniel Adair says, "When I started to get ultra-serious about my career seven years ago, I started taking *everything* seriously, including my health. I had never worked out before. I started by going for a five- or seven-minute jog around the block. Then I felt that 'runner's high.' I felt good about myself and about what I had accomplished. I wanted more of it."

Running and performing are similar, in that the hardest part is often the beginning. Whether it's getting through the first two songs or the first five to ten minutes of a run, the key is finding a rhythm (once you've warmed up). Daniel says, "There is definitely a pulse and technique involved with running. Everything has to work together and in time. Initially there's the practice involved with getting the form right, then not thinking about it and letting the flow happen. Then you have to develop the discipline and perseverance to get through it. Sounds like drumming to me!"

These days, Daniel's regimen consists of three miles on a treadmill, four or five times a week. And he recently began incorporating interval training. "I'll start at 7.5 mph and run at that pace for a minute and a half," he says. "Then I'll kick it up to 9.5 or 10 for a minute, then back down again." The advantage of interval training is that it doesn't allow the heart rate to reside in a certain zone for too long, ultimately burning lots of calories and shocking the metabolism.

Daniel tours with Nickelback nearly year-round, and he's found running to be beneficial to his performance in more ways than one. "Because I'm playing hard rock and I'm an aggressive drummer," he says, "the cardio development is essential to me. I don't run out of breath like I used to when I didn't run."

Over the past few years I've come to realize that there are other benefits to running than just being in shape.

Daniel also sings backup for the Canadian rockers, and says that running has aided his vocal technique. "Since I began singing all of the harmonies," he enthuses, "getting oxygen into every breath makes a world of difference."

Goo Goo Gone

Mike Malinin caught the running bug for the second time in his life after watching the 1994 Los Angeles Marathon. He had run cross-country in high school, but he didn't get serious about running until later on. "I wanted to get in better shape," says Mike, "and I figured, all you need is a pair of sneakers and off you go."

Mike has since taken running and drumming to another level. In addition to running for pleasure (and to keep his sanity throughout a heavy touring schedule), he took up extreme distance running. Mike now competes in races of 100 miles or more. This past summer, while on tour, he decided to test his limits by training for the Angeles Crest 100-mile race.

"All of the guys in the band thought I was crazy," Mike recalls. "I was using Google quite a bit to search for spots to run in the different cities we visited. When I ultimately ran the race, I finished 45th out of 113 people who started. I had placed 16th the year before. The main difference was that most of the spots I found to train on tour were on flat land, and that didn't translate well to the hills of the ACS 100.

"I was really proud of myself, though," says Mike. "I'm not some amazing athlete. It takes a lot of dedication to train for races of that distance. With our touring schedule, it would have been really easy for me to wake up and make the decision to not run ten to twenty miles that day."

Getting The Kinks Out

I enjoy running on the day of a show—especially when it's a highly anticipated gig. I think it's safe to assume that nearly all of us experience some nervous energy prior to a performance. While this energy is not entirely negative, heightened levels of excitement can hinder our main role as drummers, which is to provide the proper tempo or pulse for the song.

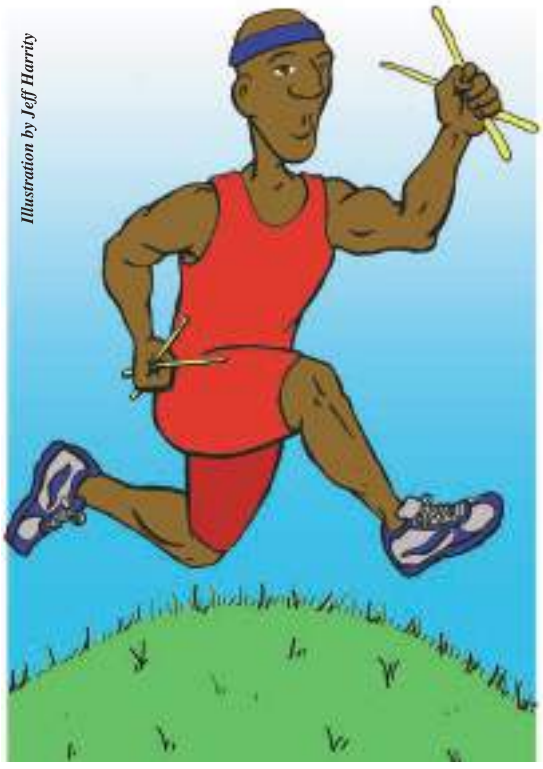


Illustration by Jeff Harrity

When I run on the day of a show, I've already achieved maximum heart rate, so the adrenaline rush I feel when hitting the stage isn't such a shock to my system. It allows me to be more relaxed, which makes for better tempos and more fluidity in my playing.

On one occasion I did an experiment to simulate the adrenaline rush of going onstage, and then starting the show with a tune that had a slower groove. I was out for a run and thinking about drummers who really "sit back" on the groove or play slightly behind the beat, such as Eric Kretz of Stone Temple Pilots or Brad Wilk of Audioslave. I decided that when I finished my run, I'd go home and immediately sit behind my drums and attempt to play Audioslave's "Cochise" off their debut record. All I can say is, *wow*. Talk about two contrasting feelings!

Granted, this may have been a somewhat extreme simulation. Nevertheless, I wouldn't want to open a show with a song like that.

Depth Perception

We often hear people refer to exercising as a drug: a release of endorphins that produces a sense of euphoria at some point. With running, this is achieved through reaching maximum heart rate.

When we listen to music, our senses are generally focused on one or two of the obvious parts of a song, such as drums and vocals. But when the blood is flowing, our perception enters another realm. I rarely run without my iPod. By listening to music while at a maximum heart rate and being in a rhythm, I've heard many new things in songs that I hadn't been tuned into before. Usually it's ear candy, such as an acoustic guitar buried in the mix, subtle effects on the instruments, or background vocals.

Sound Or Solace?

I've also found running with music to be quite a useful tool in my career as a musician. I work with a variety of musicians, playing everything from heavy rock to blues and jazz. I sometimes have to learn new material in a short amount of time. If I load the songs into my iPod and listen while running, I can kill two birds with one stone by getting exercise *and* sinking my teeth into the music.

Music is also good motivation. There may be times when I feel I've had enough of my workout and need a little extra boost to keep going. All it takes is getting to that next song or finding the tune that propels me to another level. For running, I prefer upbeat rock or groove-oriented music, like Crystal Method or Massive Attack.

Mike Malinin, on the other hand, prefers

the tranquility of silence. "I've never understood why people run with music," says Mike. "I think it defeats the purpose. Running takes me out of my normal element. I play music for a living. Running is a separate activity."

I asked Mike how he gets though twenty-eight hours of nonstop running—his time in the most recent ACS 100—without some source of external motivation. "I start out having some thoughts," he replies, "noticing my heart rate and things like that. But after a while I just get into this zone where the rhythm carries me."

Speaking of rhythm, drummers have an advantage when it comes to running, in the sense that we're used to doing things in time. "One time," Mike Malinin relates, "a training partner said to me, 'You run like a drummer.' When I asked him what he meant, he told me that all of my steps were very even, and that I ran with a certain rhythm. I never realized it before, but he was right."

Illustration by Jeff Harrity

Stress Management

Let's face it: We can all use a stress reducer in our lives. Being in a band is like being married to two or more people. When dealing with others on a frequent basis, there are bound to be issues or differences at some point. Running is a therapeutic way to deal with problems and gain a fresh perspective. For example, perhaps there is some tension within your group regarding a big decision that needs to be made. Going for a run is a great way to sort things out and return with a rational mindset.

If an issue in my life has become all-consuming, or something is making me angry, I'll try to get out for a run. It's nearly impossible to be angry or upset when you've completed a workout. Similarly, if you need to have a serious talk with someone, go for a run first. While running, you can think about how to touch only on the important things, and how to do it in a relaxed and (hopefully) tactful manner. Running helps to make the task or problem at hand not as large as it may seem.

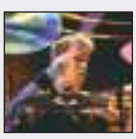
Time? What Time?

You may be thinking, "This running stuff sounds all well and good, but I'm not on tour and I don't have all the time in the world. I've got a full-time job, kids, and gigs on weekends. When am I going to find the time to run?"

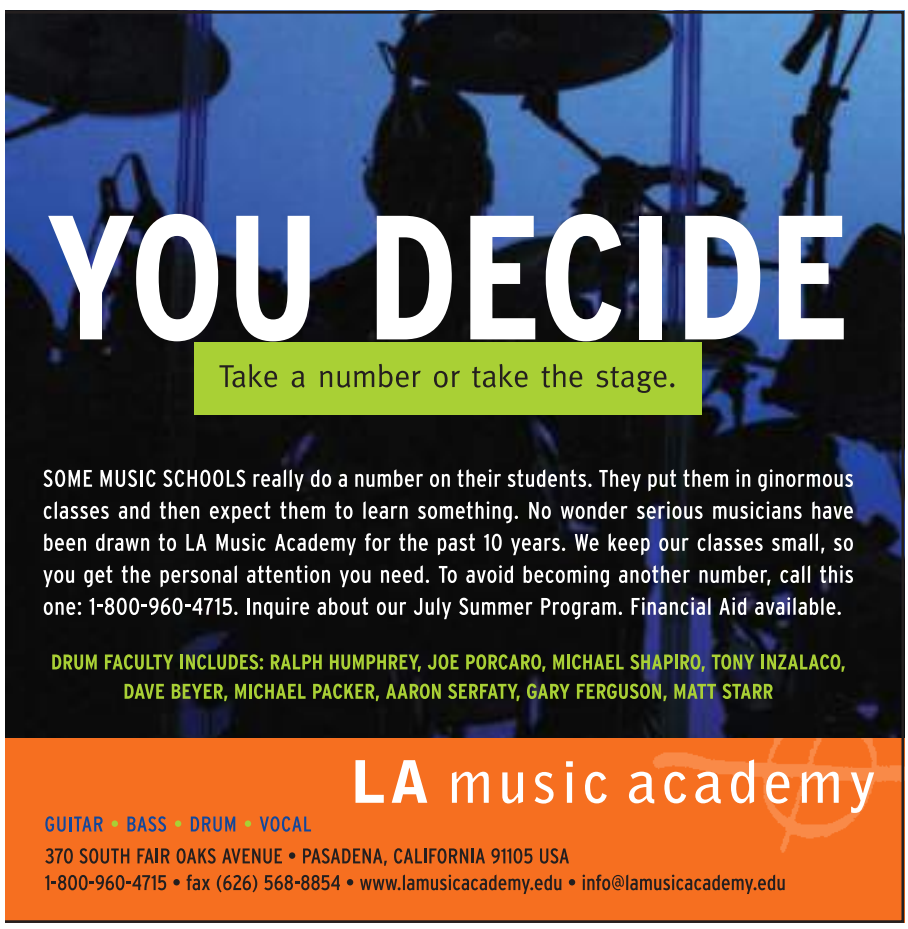
I admit it can be tough. I spend my mornings and afternoons with my two-year-old son, juggle three musical projects, teach several nights a week, and do session work. With this hectic schedule, if I can run two or three times a week for at least twenty minutes, I'm happy.

The main thing to keep in mind is that you don't need to go to extremes to find success. Fit your runs in when you can. It may take some planning. For example, you could try Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday. That way there are some breaks in between. If you know you'll have a busy day on Tuesday, maybe wake up a little earlier in order to put in your twenty minutes. Do whatever works for *you*.

I'm not suggesting that all drummers should become workout freaks. But I *can* say that running has greatly enriched my life, in more ways than one. I'm confident that it can do the same for you.



Jeremy Hummel was an original member of Breaking Benjamin. He helped that group achieve platinum status with their second release, *We Are Not Alone*. He has since turned his efforts to session work and drum instruction in Pennsylvania. Jeremy can be reached at his Web site, www.jeremyhummel.com.



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Drummers And Attorneys

Finding A Lawyer Who's Right For Your Career

by Bobby Borg

William Shakespeare once wrote, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." The fact is, most people don't trust attorneys. Part of this mistrust is due to how the media portrays them, and part of it is simply myth. We often don't trust what we don't understand—and nothing is more confusing to most of us than the language of lawyers.

I once heard a fellow drummer joke that he needed an attorney just to explain to him what his other attorney was talking about—plus a secretary willing to call all day simply to get either of them on the phone. Nonetheless, attorneys are necessary to the business of music—and to your career. As you climb the ladder of drumming success, you'll have to sign contracts—among bandmembers, with promoters, and with publishing and record companies. Unless you're a lawyer yourself, these agreements will be filled with terminology and concepts you're likely unfamiliar with—making them potentially ruinous to your career. Clearly, if you're going to survive and thrive in the music business, you're going to need to find a lawyer you can trust.

If you're going to survive and thrive in the business of music, you're going to need to find a lawyer you can trust.

Just mentioning the word attorney is enough to send most drummers into a state of panic. After all, how can you pay an attorney's fees when you can barely afford to pay for your road cases, cymbals, and heads, or chip in for your band's rehearsal studio? Even if money isn't necessarily the issue, how do you go about finding a good attorney—one who's honest, responsible, and willing to devote the time and attention to what you need? Read on.

Hiring Your Attorney

The first step in hiring an attorney is to know what you're looking for. Understand that not all attorneys specialize in the same areas of law. Even under the category of entertainment law, not all attorneys shop tapes to record labels, are experienced in trademark registration, or handle immigration issues—something extremely important to those drummers who initially travel from abroad on student or work visas and are seeking green cards. So how do you find an attorney who specializes in your area of concern? And what specific qualities in an attorney do you look for once you've found some likely candidates for personal representation?

Finding An Attorney

To find an attorney appropriate to your needs, you need to begin by utilizing all available resources. These include personal referrals, lawyer referral services, music publications, music conferences, and college and adult education courses.

The best way to find an attorney is by asking for **referrals from other musicians** and industry professionals. Be sure to consider the source of the referral; just because a drummer friend of yours is part of a successful band doesn't mean his attorney is also right for you.

A big-league lawyer representing someone like Ringo Starr will obviously not be able to give you the personal attention you need if you're still in the minors. Consider the motive of the person making the referral as well. For instance, an individual who's an accountant may simply be returning a favor to the attorney for referring someone to him.

Lastly, if a personal manager of a band with whom you'll be touring or recording recommends a lawyer to negotiate your employment agreement, you must be careful of a situation called "conflict of interest." This is when an attorney is asked to represent both sides of a deal. Since each party has its own best interests in mind, the attorney cannot act fairly. In short, you not only need to use discretion when choosing your attorney, you must also use discretion when asking for referrals.

Another way to find an attorney is through **referral services**. Ask your state or local bar association whether they've got a referral service available in your area. The California Lawyers For The Arts, located in San Francisco, refers callers to lawyers throughout California who deal exclusively with the arts. In Los Angeles, you can call the Lawyer Referral Service Of Los Angeles County Bar Association, and in Beverly Hills, there's the Beverly Hills Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service. In New York City, you can call the Association For The Bar Of New York City. In Nashville, there's the Lawyer Referral Service for the Nashville Bar Association. And so on.

Operators at referral services will listen to your legal concerns and direct you to one of the attorneys on their panel. These operators will not, however, guarantee the quality of an attorney's services or suggest which attorney you should choose. It's up to you to set up a phone consultation with an attorney and determine suitability for yourself. There's typically a small fee for the initial consultation, with fees for contin-

ued services discussed between attorney and client on an individual basis. Since "heavy hitters" aren't part of referral services (you may not be ready for one of these guys anyway), it's unlikely you'll be referred to Lars Ulrich's attorney to handle your needs. Nevertheless, it's well worth your time to call a service in your area to learn what it has to offer.

Music publications may also be helpful to you when searching for an attorney. Books such as *Music Business Attorneys Registry* (published by Music Business Registry) and *Billboard International Talent And Touring Directory* (published by the Billboard Music Group) list hundreds of attorneys, agents, and personal managers. These resources can all be found either in bookstores or online. Weekly trade magazines such as *Billboard* are also good sources of information; they'll tell you which attorneys are signing the newest bands. Finally, try checking to see whether your favorite drummer's band has listed its attorney's name and contact number on their CD artwork.

Music conferences such as the National Association Of Music Merchants (NAMM) and South By Southwest (SXSW) Music And Media Conference are a sure way to meet people in the music business. Attorneys and other industry professionals usually speak as panelists, which gives you a good opportunity to ask a few questions, introduce yourself, and at the least ask for a business card so that you're able to speak in a more relaxed setting at a later date. Keep in mind, however, that music conferences usually draw the heavy hitters of the business, so don't despair if they're unwilling to take the time to help you.

Another way to meet an attorney is by taking **college and adult education courses**, such as the ones offered in Los Angeles at the UCLA Extension Program. (Check a college near you for music-related classes.) Attorneys active in the business often teach entertainment courses at the Extension program. Taking their class will not only teach you a great deal about the business, it will provide you the opportunity to form new business relationships that might even lead to opportunities down the road. Drumming phenomenon Kenwood Dennard concedes that attorneys have not only offered him valuable advice over the years—especially in negotiating contracts—they've helped find him gigs as well.

Qualities To Look For In An Attorney

Once you've compiled a list of potential attorneys, you now have to begin the process of contacting them and setting up a first appointment. In most cases, an attorney will be willing to speak with you over the phone to discuss your needs and determine whether you even need their services.

If you're just starting out as a drummer in the music business, or if your band's legal concerns are minor, it will be difficult to get a high-powered attorney on the phone at all. Be prepared to clearly express your legal problems and concerns, to ask questions about the services each attorney provides, and to discuss potential fees so that you can ultimately make an informed selection of legal representation.

If you're seeking an attorney to shop your band, you should also be ready to send him a press kit containing a sample of your music, a photo of your band, and a biography. At worst, if an attorney doesn't have the time to get involved with you, he or she may be willing to refer you to some-

one who has.

When meeting with attorneys, it's important to assess what type of personality they have. Are they aggressive, desk-pounding go-getters who send fear through the spines of others, or are they a more laid-back, conservative type? Either can work, as long as you're convinced they're going to get the job done in a timely fashion.

Also of concern is your rapport. Do you feel comfortable in their presence, or do you feel intimidated? Do they take time to explain things to you, or do they rush through the conversation and talk down to you? Do they have a genuine interest in your drumming career or band, or do you feel that they're meeting you because you were referred by "so and so?" You don't have to be best friends with your attorney, but you want to at least feel comfortable sitting in the same room or talking on the phone. These are all important concerns that should be taken seriously before choosing your attorney.

An attorney's clout can mean the difference between getting the deal and losing it. When speaking with lawyers, don't be afraid to ask them the names of the clients they represent, and then check these references. If they shop tapes to record labels, ask them about the groups they've helped get signed. Don't expect, however, to get detailed information about the actual deals that they've negotiated. This is privileged information, and you should be wary of any attorney who violates this confidence.

Keep in mind that powerful and well-connected attorneys get their calls returned quicker than attorneys who are new in the business. However, if they're too busy handling star clients, you may very well get lost in the shuffle. Young, ambitious attorneys with great networking skills may be even more valuable to you, because they'll have more time to devote to your career. You may even get lucky to find an attorney who is a former drummer and really understands the challenges you face as a musician through his own first-hand experiences. Not surprisingly, many entertainment attorneys are former musicians who got tired of being mistreated in the business.

In any case, note that the attorney you choose to represent you will not always be the person who does most of the work. Many attorneys are gregarious types who work aggressively to bring in new business while the associates are in their offices drafting the contracts. Be sure to also ask attorneys who else will be involved in some of the day-to-day work, and how long they've been working with them.

Last, but definitely not least, always remember that an attorney's clout can't do anything for your career if you don't have the talent to deliver. Without talent, an attorney's clout, at best, might only get you a more polite rejection.

Bobby Borg is the author of *The Musician's Handbook: A Practical Guide To Understanding The Music Business* (Billboard Books). For more on Bobby, go to www.BobbyBorg.com.

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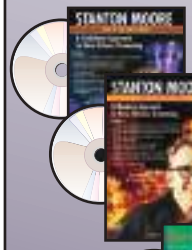

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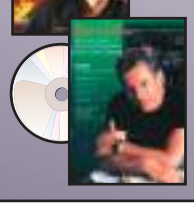

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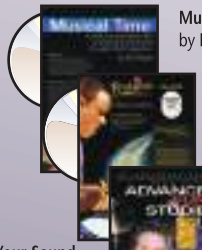

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Do-It-Yourself Percussion

Modified Brushes, Superball Mallets, And Friction Sticks

by Glenn Kotche

This column is dedicated to providing drummers and percussionists with simple and inexpensive projects for building and modifying instruments and accessories. This month's projects include simple brush modifications, as well as some nifty devices that I call superball mallets and friction sticks.

Coin brushes

Banded brush

Coin Brushes

The purpose of the first brush modification is to get a better sound when playing your brushes on cymbals. All you need for this is a coin. I suggest a US quarter, although Euros and British pounds work well too. All you need to do is mount the coin flat onto one side of the brush, where the bristles meet the handle. (Please note that this modification isn't practical if you have retractable brushes that need to stay retractable.)

I've had the best luck mounting the coin so that half of it is over the bristles and the other half is over the handle. I affix the coin by putting a dab of super glue on the top edge of the handle and then wrapping a thin strip of gaffer's tape around the bottom half of the coin and the brush handle. This keeps the top half of the coin exposed.

When you're playing cymbals, you can use the "coined" portion of the brush, getting a louder, more defined cymbal sound than the brush would get otherwise. I usually rotate the brush back to the side without the coin when playing on the snare and just pivot my arm a bit to get the coin side when going to the cymbals.

Banded Brushes

One other simple modification for non-retractable brushes is to control the breadth of the fan with a rubber band. All you need to do is wrap the rubber band around the handle of the brush several times and then roll it up the bristle portion of the brush. How far you roll it up will determine the spread of the bristles. This can be a handy tool if you're using non-retractable brushes both for their traditional swishing effect and as a softer, traditional stick.

Superball Mallets

Superball mallets can be used in a variety of performance situations where a unique, sustained tone is appropriate. They achieve a moaning sound when rubbed on drumheads and cymbals (not to mention gongs, washing machines, guitars, cars, heating ducts, or just about anything). Some people think they create sounds akin to whales or wookies.

The superball mallets that I'm referring to are not the ones used on tongue drums and waterphones, which are essentially extremely soft rubber keyboard percussion mallets. The mallets that I'm talking about are used more for rubbing or sliding across the drumhead than for actually striking it. The first person I saw using such mallets was Paul Wertico, when I was taking lessons with him.

The original Super Ball was invented by Norman Stingley and introduced by the Wham-O Corporation in the summer of 1965. The original material was dubbed Zectron, which is essentially polybutadiene (a type of rubber also used in tires, hoses, and gaskets) and sulfur. The balls were then formed under

intense pressure and high temperatures. Although the initial Super Ball fad faded, the balls have been widely copied and have stayed around to the point that most every American child has played with one at some point.

Why does a superball make a drum moan and sing? The ball may appear smooth, but it actually acts like a rough surface. The rubber molecules create a resisting force when moving against another surface. This resistance, or friction, causes the ball to bounce. When we apply pressure to the superball mallets as we're rubbing them across the head, the bounces are extremely small and rapid—which, in turn, creates a sustained tone.

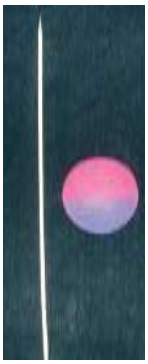
In my extensive experimentation with making my own superball mallets, I've found one particular design to work best: half of a ball attached to a bamboo skewer handle. There are many different kinds of superballs available at toy stores and on the Internet. I've had the best results with the softer and larger, 2"- to $2^1/_2$"-diameter balls. The 12" bamboo skewers I use can be found at most grocery, kitchen, or dollar stores in inexpensive packs of 100.

Step 1. *Carefully* (remember, we need our fingers) cut the superball in half with any sharp or serrated knife or handsaw. I cut along the seam in a sawing motion and usually have no problem. Don't worry if bits of the rubber flake or are cut off. The mallet will still work just fine.

Step 2. (Again, carefully) push the sharp end of the skewer through the center of the flat, freshly cut underside of the ball. Do this slowly, holding the skewer near the sharp end to avoid breaking the bamboo. I push the skewer all the way through the half ball so there is about an inch of it sticking through the top of the ball.

Step 3. Reinforce the entry and exit points of the skewer with super glue or hot glue. This helps keep the skewer in place and also helps prevent splitting of the ball,

˅˅ The "parts" needed for a superball mallet



˄˄ Superball mallets of various sizes

˄˄ Dragging the superball mallet across a drumhead will create a "moaning" sound.

which is more common with smaller and firmer superballs. Let the glue dry and you're ready to go.

You can shorten the skewer and attach both halves of the ball (or two different-sized halves), facing opposite ways at each end, allowing the mallet to be played with both a pulling and pushing motion.

You can also make these mallets without cutting the ball in half. A full ball with a handle is the only way that I saw them until trying the half-ball idea myself. However, I've found the half-ball version to be much more effective, since I don't need to use as much pressure when playing with it. Some drummers use a length of cable in place of a handle, attaching a ball at each end. But the pliability and pressure that the skewer affords has proven superior in my experiments.

The most common playing technique for superball mallets is to drag the mallet across the head from one side of the rim to the opposite side, starting from the far side of the drum and moving towards your body. This can be done in a straight line, a zigzag, or a figure-eight motion. You can also hold two mallets at the same time and get a "chord." Experiment and use the technique that works best for you to get the sounds that you desire.

Superball mallets are commercially available for those looking for high-quality, pre-made models. But the cheap cost of materials and super-easy assembly make this an ideal DIY percussion project.

Friction Sticks

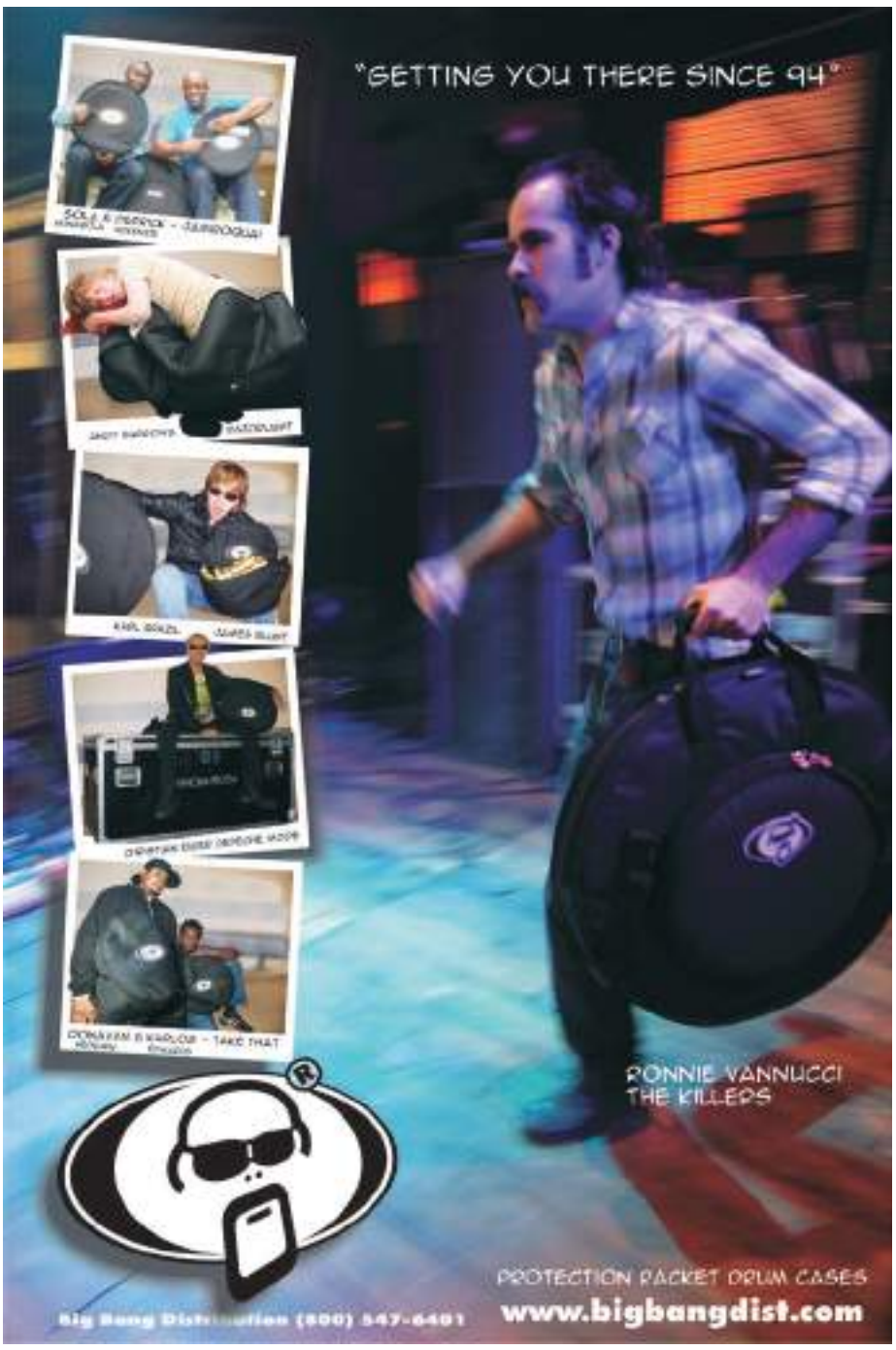
An implement that creates a sound similar to that of the superball mallet is the friction stick. This can be made simply, by waxing a dowel rod. I use $^{3}/_{16}$" standard wooden doels available at any hardware, lumber, or crafts store. Then I rub beeswax or tambourine wax on the surface of the entire dowel. Beeswax can be found online, at crafts stores, or where didgeridoos are sold. Only a very small amount is needed.

The sticks are played by resting one end of the dowel on the drumhead, keeping the stick perpendicular to the head at a 90° angle. Grip the dowel gently at the top between your thumb and index finger, and glide your hand down to the base of the dowel. The friction of your fingers on the stick will cause a vibration that will be transferred into the drum, causing it to moan.

Experiment with pressure between your thumb and index finger to change the volume and pitch of the moan. (This technique can actually be used with any drumstick—waxed or un-waxed—if you have the right amount of pressure and your hands are clammy enough.)

How and when suberball mallets and friction sticks are a musical asset is up to the individual. I've had great success with them when improvising in live situations, as well as in the studio when an interesting color is needed. (I used them on the last two Wilco records.) They can also be of value as a sound effect. It never hurts to have extra sound options on hand—especially small and inexpensive ones, and even more especially ones that offer a sustained tone.

Glenn Kotche is the drummer/percussionist for eclectic rock band Wilco. This past September he was a featured performer at MD's Festival Weekend 2006.



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Digital Editing & Drumming

Producers And Drummers Plug In

by David John Farinella

There was a time when drummers would park themselves behind a kit and play take upon take upon take to get just the right performance. It wasn't unheard of for a day to go by while players, producers, and engineers manually manipulated drums, microphones, and ideas until a series of parts were recorded that met the creative vision for a song.

While those methods haven't entirely vanished from recording studios, the advent and boom in popularity of digital audio workstations (commonly referred to as DAWs) and plug-ins à la Beat Detective have drastically reduced the time, sweat, and effort necessary to get the "right" take recorded. That's not to say that drummers are playing with less passion or are necessarily settling for mediocre takes. But more and more, the temptation is there.

On the flip side, moving from behind a kit to behind a computer monitor offers a level of creativity that's almost unparalleled. Drummers are adding sounds to kits, replacing recorded drum sounds with sampled sounds, and throwing sounds through a bevy of effects that weren't possible before.

The reality is that DAWs (most prominently Digidesign's Pro Tools) and plug-ins are ubiquitous ingredients in today's recording scene. This month *Modern Drummer* looks inside the recording studio and talks to a handful of players, engineers, and producers to uncover how these digital tools are impacting the drum tracks appearing on releases across the globe.

Drummer Chat

From the player's point of view, the use of Pro Tools has mostly been a positive experience. "Whatever facilitates good sounds and good performances is fine by me," states Joey Waronker (Beck, Pink, Neil Finn). "And Pro Tools works. I don't like to get too bogged down in the minutia of analog versus digital. If things are sounding right, then I'm happy.

"It's incredibly convenient to be able to keep recording without breaks for rewinding and reel changes," Waronker continues. "The creative flow never gets interrupted. Then again, you may want the added pressures and interruptions associated with tape. It depends on the situation. For better or worse, the editing flexibility of DAWs, and Pro Tools in particular, has become a standard in recording. Even if you use Pro Tools more like a tape machine, it's nice to know that you have the option to fix a mistake on an otherwise great take."

Torry Castellano of The Donnas agrees: "I think that it can make things a lot easier, obviously. We've been using Pro Tools to demo, and when we record, we sometimes use it in the studio. I think the technology can be cool if it's used in the right way."

While "the right way" is subjective and dependent upon the genre being recorded, the key for the drummers interviewed for this story is that the drum tracks being recorded in a digital medium retain some of the analog feel. "Pro Tools is good and it can be efficient for somebody who is trying to get stuff done quickly," says Dean Butterworth (Good Charlotte, Morrissey, Ben Harper). "But I do feel that in some styles of music you want it to breathe.

"If you're listening to a Pink Floyd record," Butterworth continues, "you can tell that it breathes. It sounds as if maybe some of it wasn't even cut to a click. If it was, maybe it was moving around from the click enough so that you can tell it's breathing and natural. Even Led Zeppelin, as great as John Bonham was, he made the stuff breathe. It wasn't regimented, stiff, and locked to a grid. I think a lot of that has been lost in music and in the rhythm tracks of music today."

Drummer Brian MacLeod (Roseanne Cash, Sheryl Crow, Chris Isaak) concurs with the Bonham reference and adds Charlie Watts to the discussion. "If you took John Bonham and put him in Pro Tools and then put him in Beat Detective, he

"The creative flow never gets interrupted with Pro Tools. Then again, you may want the interruptions."
—Joey Waronker

"Sometimes you'll hear a song that's been Auto-Tuned, and it doesn't sound right because there's no heart in it. It just goes from one note to the next without any build or feel. I think that's too bad."
–Torry Castellano

"John Bonham made stuff breathe. It wasn't regimented, stiff, and locked to a grid. I think a lot of that has been lost in music today."

—Dean Butterworth

would sound like Mr. Generic Drummer," MacLeod says. "Unfortunately, a lot of the pop music I hear, especially the young starlets, is so Pro Tooled it sounds too perfect and completely sterile. Listen to Charlie Watts; his snare is a little behind the beat and his kick drum is a little ahead, but that's his *sound*. People are messing with people's feel with Pro Tools."

MacLeod has had a number of experiences where his drum tracks have been cut and then put on the grid within Pro Tools to ensure uniformity. "The grid—I hate it," Brian says. "'Let's do everything on the grid.' I can't imagine some blues band saying that. Where's the feel? On the Roseanne Cash stuff I did [2006's *Black Cadillac*], we played it live and there were a lot of clunker drum things in there. But at the end of the day, I was the only one focused on that stuff."

That said, MacLeod was the drummer of choice when producer Linda Perry was working on Pink's breakout track, "Get The Party Started." "Linda had me play the drums on the track," Brian says. "I'm pretty good at locking to a drum machine; I've been doing it since I was a kid. Then the engineer Beat Detective'd my whole drum track. So basically I was locked into the drum machine and you could barely tell there were real drums on the track. There were just a couple of fills and just a little 'breathing' so you could hear a drummer on the track.

"Well, Linda played it for the head of the record label and he said, 'I'm not digging this track. It's not sounding right. I think I might want to have somebody remix it.' Linda said, 'Wait a minute. Come into the studio and tell me what you don't like.' So she played back the song, and the first thing she did was mute the live drum tracks. He immediately said, 'Yeah, *that* sounds great.' He was coming from a different world and he wasn't used to live drums. So that's how the song came out."

View From The Other Side

Recently engineer Ross Hogarth (Kelly Clarkson, Melissa Etheridge, John Fogerty) has seen where gridding a drum track has been imperative. "A human being cannot play at 140 bpms without missing a snare hit somewhere over the course of four minutes," Hogarth insists. "The world's greatest drummers can't do that. Also, everyone used to think that a great rock drummer who never rushed and who always laid right in the pocket was cool. Well, the perception of that as being hip has changed. Now people want that never-stopping, relentless, never-take-a-breath type of vibe."

Producer Dave Jerden is no stranger to using Pro Tools on sessions, but he'll avoid it while working on rhythm tracks because he's aiming for a natural feel. "You can't *fix* feel," he exclaims. "You can put things on a grid and chop them up with so much precision that they're right, but you cannot make a groove. You can't do it. When I record stuff, I use Pro Tools as a tape machine. I don't use it as a tool to chop everything up to the grid to make it spot-on perfect. You know, I think a good performance is still a good performance."

One of the benefits of Pro Tools is the ability to comp together multiple takes easily and quickly. Indeed, for some producers the aesthetic is to record ten takes of the same song and then put it together. Of course, that's not different from the days when engineers were splicing tape, says Grammy Award–winning engineer Michael Rosen. "The cool thing about Pro Tools is if you're an old-school guy like me or you know people who know about recording, it's a great tape machine. You can edit way faster because you don't have to shuffle reels of tape, and you can do six takes and put together a great one using those six," he explains. "That's kind of what we used to do with analog when we'd have to take each of the six reels and hack them up physically, which was highly inconvenient and laborious. If you use it like a tape machine, you just copy and paste."

Hogarth adds, "I've been editing drums my whole career. When we did it on tape

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we shaved off bits of tape, so this is nothing new. But now you can do it down to a gnat's ass." And while the use of Pro Tools is often a post-production application, Hogarth will mike a drumkit differently when he knows the producer is going to chop the tracks. "In the past I don't think I ever used a ride cymbal microphone," he explains. "I always used overheads and room mic's to capture the ride cymbal. But with Beat Detective, what you're dealing with is trying to rid the drums of time-frame reference, so the farther away a microphone is from the source, the bigger the time lag it creates.

"If I'm tracking drums that are going to be put on a grid," Hogarth continues, "one thing I'll do is stick a mic as close as I possibly can on the ride cymbal, because when I'm doing Beat Detective I want the ride cymbal to be a part of the grid. So I'll use the kick, snare, hi-hat, toms, and ride cymbal mics, not overhead or room mics."

Going For Takes

Although she admits to using Pro Tools in the studio, Castellano prefers to go for a full take while recording with The Donnas. "When you're recording a song, and that's the way the song is going to be on the record for the rest of your life, I think it's important to feel like you *nailed* it as much as possible," she urges. "I'm not saying that it's never happened. But you can't be lazy, like, 'It doesn't matter, we can comp it.' I think it's important to have the feeling that you get when you've played a great take of a song."

There are times, though, where piecing tracks together is important. For instance, when The Donnas were recording the 2004 release *Gold Medal*, Castellano was recovering from wrist surgery, so Pro Tools was useful. "I couldn't play as long and I couldn't hit as hard," she explains. "We were in a time crunch, so I did the best I could. But if we needed to comp some tracks, I was fine with that. Knowing it was a possibility took the pressure off."

The use of plug-ins like Beat Detective has rankled some, yet Rosen points out that at times a plug-in is a necessary evil. "Some drummers just suck," he states. "What do you do? You can't build a house on a shitty foundation, so if the drummer sucks, you have Beat Detective there. You say, 'Well, you don't play well enough to stay on the click, so here we go.' If the drummer can't play to a click, then no matter what you do it's not going to change that. You might as well dump the track into Beat Detective, be done with it, and not beat up the poor kid."

That philosophy of taking a drummer who, essentially, is rhythmically illiterate and making him functional is frustrating to drummers like Butterworth, who spend hours upon hours practicing. "I have a career in this business because it's been instilled in me that you need to practice to get better at your craft," he insists. "I just feel that's all gone and the record-making process has changed. It's a bummer.

"With Pro Tools you can get somebody who hasn't really worked on their craft and make them sound good," Butterworth continues. "I hate that. That's my gripe against Pro Tools. You don't have to work on your craft. I come from a generation of musicians that practices. Of course, I'm not saying that all musicians coming up now aren't as dedicated as we were."

Waronker points out that those drummers who are more concerned with waveforms and grids may be missing the creative process of recording. "It's easy to get tied up in the minutia and lose perspective," he reports. "I like to avoid overthinking and second-guessing. In my opinion, a lot of people feel pressure to be able to use Pro Tools and other music software programs. I think it's a great idea to know at least the basics of how all the programs work. But I hope there's an emphasis on giving a great performance too.

"There is a particular art to being recorded as a musician," he continues, "and it's a talent that I think is essential. My gut feeling is that knowing how to edit yourself in Pro Tools has some obvious advantages, but it can also make you slack off in terms of developing your performance skills while being recorded. As a recording musician, you need to be able to make your instrument sound appropriate for the music you're playing and give out your most passionate live performance without being too wild or making too many mistakes. You have to know how to hit the drums and tune them so they feel and sound right. And you need to be able to play the right feel for the song."

Castellano agrees that it's all about the song and, in fact, points out that Auto-Tune

and Beat Detective can remove the emotion from a song. "Sometimes you'll hear a song that's been Auto-Tuned," she says, "and it doesn't sound right because there's no heart in it. It just goes from one note to the next without any build or organic feel. I think that's too bad. Beat Detective is not heartfelt to me, which is one of the main things I love about listening to music. So I can't really say that other people shouldn't do it if that's what they're into. But I think that it can really take away from the song, even though it's supposedly going to help it."

What would Castellano say if a producer approached her with the news that her tracks were going to be put into Beat Detective? "Well, I don't have a problem playing along to a click track," she answers. "I mean, if he said, 'You're all over the place,' I'd feel like we should just play it again."

Plug-In And Play

Although it might be the most used—some might argue *over*-used—plug-in, Beat Detective is not the only one that drummers are using these days. Manipulating tracks with distortion, reverb, flange, and other effects is nothing new, but having those tools within Pro Tools adds a level of creativity that's unparalleled. "I use all the plug-ins I can get my hands on," MacLeod admits. "And I have a lot of outboard gear. It's the same as everything else: The outboard gear has more character and dimension, but when you're trying to work fast and be creative, the plug-ins are pretty darn good. One of the great things about Pro Tools is that you can copy tracks, so I'll take the room-mic track, copy it, run that track through Amplitude, and put it through an amp and give it this crunchy sound. I do love that versatility. I have a small room, but I can make my drums cavernous or tight-'70s, and that's why I like the plug-ins."

One of the plug-ins that Butterworth has used, SoundReplacer, came in handy after he did a session on a mediocre drumkit. "Then a producer came in and replaced the kick drum with the best-sounding drum you've ever heard," he explains. "You can get away with some things if you don't have the best-quality stuff." There are other plug-ins, like Drumagog, that do the same thing as SoundReplacer.

Is "Perfect" Enough?

The bottom line, for many bands, is that the pressure for success is stunning, and that makes drummers (and singers, for that matter) aim for perfection to get on the radio and sell CDs. "I think people will do anything they think will get them through the locked doors and into the club," Rosen says, "whether it's what's in their heart or what they think is right."

The question, then, comes down to this: Are bands and drummers cheating their fans by putting together tracks that could never be replicated live? "I think it depends on what the band's goals are," Castellano says. "I think if your thing is to do something in the studio that's not really a rock 'n' roll song, but something that's a little more complex that you want to sound a certain way, that's fine. But if you're doing it and you want to be a great live band, then it seems like that would be really hard to do. You'd be in a bad situation."

Coheed & Cambria's Josh Eppard is divided on the issue. "I enjoy listening to those sampled kick drums beating the shit out of my chest," he starts. "But I wouldn't want to pay $25 to see a band because I love the record, and find out they absolutely couldn't do it. To me, that's not even the same song. That's not fair at all. At the same time, editing in Pro Tools is good. If I play a six-minute song three times, and two minutes from each take is the smoking-ist I've ever played, God, I want to put those sections together. I want to sound like the best drummer in the world. Of course, who doesn't want to sound like the best at what they do? Pro Tools is great for a lot of things, and I'm glad it's there for a lot of things, but I don't think it's smart to make music a numbers game."

MacLeod brings it down to the most basic, and maybe the most important, point: "Pro Tools is definitely fast, and you can be creative with it. You can move things around and sometimes happy accidents happen, where you slide something around and it's wacky and interesting. It all depends. The old adage—and it's so corny—is true: It's really up to the song. If you record something on a 4-track at home and the song is amazing, then it doesn't matter. It's definitely about the song."

ROBERT RANDOLPH & THE FAMILY BAND'S

MARCUS RANDOLPH

SACRED STICKS

SINCE 2000, MARCUS RANDOLPH HAS JOINED HIS COUSIN, STEEL-GUITAR VIRTUOSO ROBERT RANDOLPH, IN BRINGING FEEL-GOOD CHURCH GROOVES TO THE CONCERT STAGE. WITH THE FAMILY BAND'S NONSTOP TOURING AND NEW SONG-FOCUSED ALBUM, *COLORBLIND*, MORE FANS THAN EVER ARE TAKING NOTICE.

We at *MD* are well acquainted with drummers who have a long history of practice, education, and performance. The bulk of these musicians have "paid their dues" over long years of grueling low-paying gigs, with nothing but a love of music and a belief in themselves to sustain them through the hard times, toward, at least in the cases we read about, successful careers.

But sometimes a drummer comes along who's in the right place at the right time and boards the train to success before it suffers engine failure. Marcus Randolph would be the first to admit that he falls into this category, and it might be tempting to resent his good fortune—if he weren't so darned honest, appreciative, and perfect for the group he's a part of, Robert Randolph & The Family Band.

After all, he *is* family. The twenty-five-year-old drummer grew up on the same Irvington, New Jersey street as his steel guitar–playing cousin Robert, and the two cut their musical teeth together at the House Of God Pentecostal Church in the nearby town of Orange. Though Marcus began playing music around age eleven, he never planned to be a career musician. Yet here he is, logging hundreds of performances in the US and overseas with an act that's growing more popular every year.

Family Band supporters like Eric Clapton have taken notice of Robert Randolph's searing, soulful guitar work, which can rise up to the heavens with shimmering beauty, and then crash back through the atmosphere and set hips a-shaking down below. But the guitarist has a not-so-secret weapon: his band. Marcus on drums, Danyel Morgan on bass and vocals, and Jason Crosby on keyboards help their leader spread the kind of infectious foot-stomping energy that's led to memorable sets at the Bonnaroo festival and fan-gathering opening slots with The Dave Matthews Band, The Allman Brothers, Santana, and Slowhand himself.

STORY BY MICHAEL PARILLO
PHOTOS BY RICK MALKIN

Marcus started out playing the brisk two-beat patterns he learned in church, with only his fellow House Of God drummers as his influences. Since the 1930s, the congregation has had the "Sacred Steel" guitar (first lap steel and then, in the '70s, pedal steel) as its musical centerpiece. As cousin Robert became more proficient on the instrument, which can uncannily mimic the cadences of the human voice, he invited Marcus to join him on drums at 2000's inaugural Sacred Steel Convention in Florida. Things took off from there. *Fast*.

Unlike most of us, Marcus is learning on the big stage. He's grown tenfold since the band started, and he's dedicated to only getting better. He's spent months studying his touring partners Carter Beauford, Dennis Chambers, and Steve Gadd at close range, and it shows. An impressive maturation is evident on The Family Band's funky, bluesy, sure-handed latest album, *Colorblind*, which was released in October 2006 and follows the 2003 studio debut *Unclassified*.

Where *Unclassified* and 2002's *Live At The Wetlands* were mostly about the group's energetic jamming and Robert's charismatic guitar work, *Colorblind* adds the vital component of catchy songcraft. A good song demands a tasty groove, and Marcus has answered the call. His *Colorblind* beats feature a deeper pocket and more part-based nuance than we've heard from him before. By choice, he's not one to play over-the-top fills—that can be a sin in groovy music, in church *and* onstage—but he throws in some tasty licks and even blasts a bit of double bass on a cover of The Byrds' "Jesus Is Just Alright," which features Clapton along with Robert on guitar and vocals.

But let's let Marcus tell the rest of his story, starting from the beginning. Anyway, as he says, "I've been there from day one. I *am* The Family Band."

MD: Let's begin with your early days of drumming.

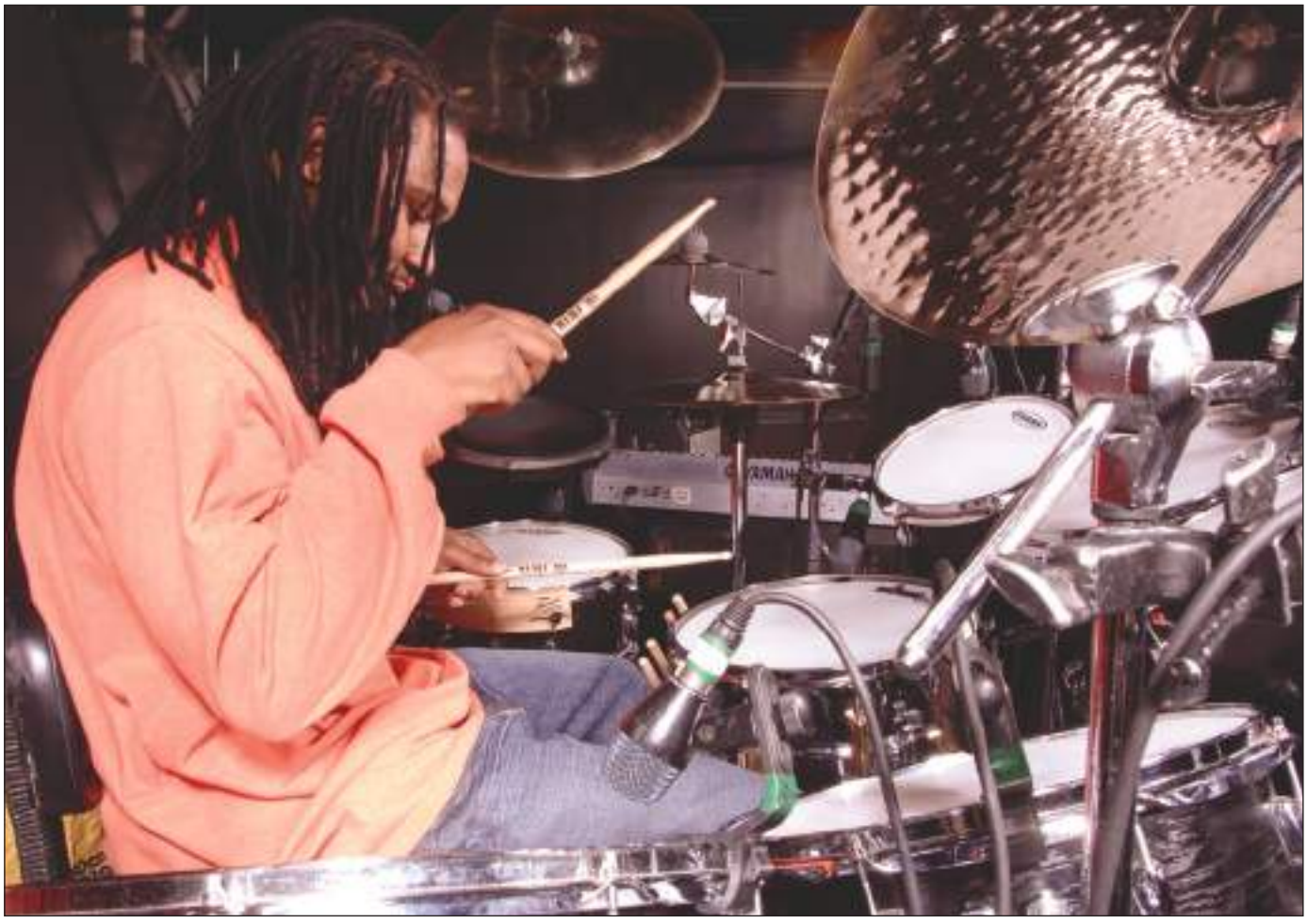
Marcus: I started playing in church. My mother used to make me go. Well, I don't like to say "make," because I liked going sometimes. Back then Robert and my big brother would be playing the drums, and as soon as they got up I would run over. I was no good. I would just play around.

Then Robert started playing steel guitar, and my brother started playing bass, and I was the only one left to play drums. I really just played because there was nothing else to do. I didn't want to sit in church and just clap my hands. [laughs]

MD: You also dabbled in steel guitar, right?

Marcus: Definitely. Robert made that popular, and I was like, "Ah, the girls like the guy on the steel—lemme pick up the steel!" [laughs] I still have a little bit of skills. Just being around Robert all the time, I keep stuff in my head. I like the steel, but I love the drums now.

I wouldn't say I *really* got into music until about seventeen, when we started the band. That's when I started playing every day. Before that, I used to hang out on the streets, doing what bad people do. I sold drugs, I got into fights, I did a lot of stuff.



That kept me from my music, but when Robert wanted to start a band, that took me *right* out of the streets. My friends wondered, "Where are you going? You leaving us out here?" I was like, "I can't just be playing around with y'all all day." Friends started dying, getting locked up, and all that stuff that happens in the streets.

I was happy my mom and dad made me go to church to learn the drums, because what would I have to fall back on? If I didn't play, Robert would've found somebody else. But you have to stick with the people who are going to be there for you. There were other drummers in church who were better than me, but they wouldn't have been dependable. I stuck by Rob, and I'm still here, seven years later. It's just flashed before my eyes.

MD: It sounds like music swooped in and saved you.

Marcus: It definitely saved me. I've still got friends in the streets, and I love 'em all and I treat 'em well. That's why they show me respect. I don't just come out there bragging about being in a band. I try to encourage them: "I understand you gotta do what you gotta do to survive. But you have to try to make a change somewhere." I could have stayed out there. I could have easily said, "Rob, chill. I'm getting *money* out here." Because when the band started, there wasn't any money being made. The first year and a half, I was still on the streets. But I chose to go on the right path.

Around that time my wife was pregnant, so I was like, "I gotta change." Now I have a son who's four. It's hard leaving him. I'm away from him right now, and I want to see him. But I know I'll see him later on today, or next week, or however it goes. He's gotta be taken care of, and that's it.

MD: Did the music you played in church sound anything like what The Family Band is doing?

Marcus: Yeah. We took the same grooves we did in church and played them in clubs. We still do that. We'll do an all-out church jam, and people will go crazy, as if they were in church. It never leaves our roots. It's something that uplifts people—I don't look at it as just a church jam.

I hear a lot of bands doing that *boom-chack, boom-chack* beat. It's just this "up" beat to get people moving and feeling good. I thought it was a church thing, but people were doing that all over.

Drums: Yamaha Oak Custom in black finish
A. 6x12 Musashi oak snare
B. 6½x14 Paul Leim signature snare
C. 8x10 tom
D. 9x12 tom
E. 10x13 tom
F. 12x14 tom
G. 14x16 tom
H. 17x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 20" A Custom ride
2. 10" A Custom splash
3. 14" K Custom Session hi-hats
4. 17" A Custom crash
5. 8" A Custom splash
6. 15" A Custom crash
7. 6" A Custom splash
8. 16" K Dark medium-thin crash
9. 20" Pre-Aged K Dry light ride
10. 20" Oriental China Trash

Percussion: LP
aa. cowbell
bb. Jam Block

Hardware: Yamaha, including a DFP 9310 double pedal

Heads: Evans Power Center reverse dot on main snare batter, Genera Dry on 12" snare, G2s on tops of toms with Resonant black underneath, EQ3 on bass drum batter with EQ3 Resonant on front

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B Marcus Randolph model

Electronics: Yamaha DXT2SU module and triggers

Mics: Sennheiser 905s on snares, 904s on toms, 901 and 902 on bass drum (along with Yamaha Sub-Kick), 914 on hi-hat and overheads, IEM300 in-ear monitors, Aura Bass Shaker

I don't want to sound cocky, but I don't think anybody can get me at that beat. They might get me at those other funky beats and doing all their little triplets, but when it comes to a straight, hard beat in the pocket, 1-2, 1-2, I don't think anybody can get with me on it. If anybody needs a strong beat like that, I ain't got a problem with playing on people's records. [laughs]

MD: So the audience reaction might be similarly energetic at church and at a secular performance?

Marcus: Yeah. My parents came to a show when we first started, and they were like, "Those people were jumping around like they were in church!" We've just got the type of music that picks up people's spirits.

MD: Are there things you'd do in church but not in a club, and vice versa?

Marcus: We definitely wouldn't play our rock 'n' roll stuff at church. But some people do. Or if I hear something on a rap CD, I may practice it and bring it in to church, but I won't play the same exact thing.

It's all just *music*. Church people sing about Jesus and God, but you might have the same type of groove in blues, and people are singing, "Baby, I miss you." It's all the same—who you're singing to and who you're singing about is what splits it up.

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Marcus Randolph

MD: I was wondering if maybe Robert uses less distortion in church….

Marcus: Hey, man—Robert is Robert. He's gonna give you everything he's got, and they love it.

MD: Do you consider yourself religious?

Marcus: I can't really call myself religious, because I drink, I smoke. But I believe in God. I'll say a prayer in a heartbeat. A lot of people only pray when things happen. I pray just lying in my bed. Sometimes you've just got to thank God. You're only here because of God.

MD: Did playing in church bring anything specific to your drumming style?

Marcus: It gave me stamina, because in church, you've got to *play*. People are going spirit-crazy, and everybody's shouting and speaking in tongues. So I learned how to stay back there without being tired.

MD: You play open-handed on a righty kit. Are you left-handed?

Marcus: I do everything with my right hand—write, pitch, shoot basketball, knock people out…. [laughs] Robert's older brother always played on the ride with his left hand [on a righty setup], so I thought that was the way to go. I just recently started switching [to a cross-handed style]. I learned that gives me more power in my [kick] foot. Now I play half the set that way, because I can lay into my

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foot with more power and quickness. I go both ways—I don't know how I do it. I'm just trying to keep the pocket, and just following my dream.

That's it—this is a dream I just recently got, but now I want to *do* this. And I'm not trying to be anybody else. One day I said to Dennis Chambers, "I want to be like you." He was like, "No. You want to be like *you*." And he was right. When I see Dennis with Santana, or Carter Beauford with Dave Matthews, or Steve Gadd with Eric Clapton, I just sit and watch them the whole time. I don't want to be those guys, but I love what they do, and I'll definitely take something from them. And I love Jimi Hendrix. Mitch Mitchell was all over the place, but I love it.

I'm not playing to impress somebody. My cousin Dwayne showed me a Web site

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called Gospel Chops. These Gospel drummers, the first thing they'd do is [sings wild fills]. And I'm like, "How long can this man keep a straight beat without touching that tom-tom?" You can't go in the studio doing that stuff, unless you're playing for someone who wants that.

I'm not trying to disrespect anyone for doing that, but Dennis and Carter, they'll show you how to do tricks and everything on their DVD. But at their shows, they're in the *pocket*. They'll do a fast roll, but they'll come right back in the pocket and just *lay* there, and you're like, "Damn, I feel like laying there. I want to get up in there!" [laughs]

MD: What else have you learned from being around guys like Carter and Dennis?

Marcus: They're both just good guys. I respect them and their style, and how humble they are. They're not cocky. Some people just want to show off. But these guys *love* it, and that's where I get my inspiration. I *love* to go out there—give me my in-ears and say, "C'mon, ten minutes," and I'm *ready*. And now that I'm getting better and feeling more comfortable, and my foot is even getting a little faster, I'll be playing my heart out.

MD: You throw in licks on the double pedal now and then. Is that relatively new for you?

Marcus: I've been playing that for about two and a half years. I got it after seeing Carter. My foot was slow. I was just starting to get faster with my one foot, so I used the double kick to do triplets and that type of stuff. And now I don't like playing without knowing the double pedal is there. I don't even have to use it, but I've got to know it's there if I feel like using it.

And before, if I broke a pedal, there was nothing else for me to do. But I would punt with my left foot when I played football as a kid. So now, if the one pedal breaks, I'm like, "Oh, snap!" and I play *boom-chack, boom-chack* with my left foot.

MD: Have you done much practicing on your own?

Marcus: To be honest, I started practicing about four months ago. Before then, it was just practicing at soundcheck. We play so many gigs—I'd say 250 a year. That's basically practice for us. We don't really have rehearsals, we kind of just let it fly. But recently, as I'm looking up to these other drummers, that's when I've started practicing and trying to fit some other things in there. And I have a drum pad on the bus, and I'll just mess around and get my arms loose.

MD: Before we sat down, you said a lot of your favorite music is hip-hop.

Marcus: I grew up listening to Tupac. He spoke from his heart—everything Tupac said was real. Biggie Smalls, Jay-Z, Nas, Scarface—I listen to all these people. You need to get *Untouchable* by Scarface. I'm *telling* you. You know that song he did with 'Pac called "Smile"?

MD: Um….

Marcus: C'mon, man, you gotta get up on your hip-hop! How do you expect me to be up on this rock 'n' roll when you're not up on your hip-hop? [laughs] I grew up on Gospel too—my mom listened to a lot of Gospel around the house. But after hearing all this Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, I'm like, "Why haven't I been listening to *this* shit!"

And back in the day I used to write raps, but I'm writing *songs* now, and people are actually saying they're good. I just got a laptop and I was using Garage Band, doing a track on the bus. Robert was like, "We can use this for the next album." And I was like, "For real?" [laughs] I'm low-key and always hard on myself.

MD: *Colorblind* is more song-focused than your previous stuff. What did that mean for your drumming?

Marcus: When we started out we were just jamming, and you can't do that forever. If you come to our show, you're *gonna* get jams. But now you can come see us jam, *and* you can come hear your favorite song. We can't just stay at the same level. I think Robert really stepped it up, getting in there and writing some songs with other people.

And that stepped up my drum game. Now I'm playing different parts, where usually I was just rocking out. I'm getting better, because I'm learning. I learn from being with different producers. They're like, "You can't do that—you gotta do this." I used to get mad, like, "Are you telling me how to play? If you want to get somebody else, go ahead." But this time, whatever they said, I was going to try to do. You've got to know how to take direction sometimes.

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MD: Did you cut the basic tracks live?

Marcus: Everything was live, and I played a lot with loops, to give it a full sound. But as it got mixed down, you could see the drums take over the loop. There's also a lot of songs that aren't like that, like "Thrill Of It"—that's all me.

MD: You hadn't played with loops before, right?

Marcus: That's why I had a problem with producers. Before *Colorblind*, we started doing a Gospel album that we haven't put out. We were working with a producer who brought in loops and beat machines. It started playing in my ear, and I was like, "Nah, take that out." And they were looking at me, like, "This is what Gospel drummers are doing." And I'm sitting there like, "Well, brother, don't call me a Gospel drummer then, because I'm not gonna do it."

I actually left the studio and went home. They got somebody else to play, but it wasn't right—it wasn't *us*. I ended up having to come back and do it over. So either way you look at it, I'm coming to get the job done. [laughs]

MD: Eventually it became more comfortable?

Marcus: Yeah, I took the discipline, and now I can play with loops like nothing. I definitely learned from people telling me what I couldn't do. If I saw that producer right now, I'd probably thank him for telling me he was going to get a new drummer to do it, because that made me say, "This ain't happening again." I was embarrassed, I was hurt. But all he did was make me better.

MD: Have you had to work on your timekeeping, or has steady time come naturally?

Marcus: I've worked on that. In the beginning I used to speed up a lot. If you listen to *Live At The Wetlands*, that's before I liked Dennis, before I liked Carter. It's like: Robert wanted me to play, and I'm playing. But *now*, I'm watching people. I see how they stay in the pocket, and I see when they speed up.

Back then the song would start, and before you know it [taps out an accelerating tempo]. I'd listen to tapes and be like, "Damn. I'm embarrassed that somebody's gotta listen to this." It's just learning and playing with loops, and just *playing* more, that taught me how to stay in the pocket instead of speeding up.

MD: How do you see your role in the band? Robert's flying around on instrumental frenzies, and it seems like you keep him in line.

Marcus: Like I said, we don't practice a lot and make sure everything is hit on the same mark. So sometimes he may be ready to change or go to the bridge and the other bandmembers might not know what's about to happen—but I know *exactly* what's about to happen. And boom, we're in the next spot.

Everybody looks at me. Without me, a lot of things can go wrong. I'll know when Rob's about to do something, just from his eyes, and from playing with him for so long. That's the thing about being family. And the band is getting good at that too. Sometimes they don't even have to look at me now.

I consider myself the backbone. I *have* to be there. I'm not saying I'm as good as Carter—make *sure* you put down that I'm not saying I'm Carter—but there's no Dave Matthews Band without Carter. It would *not* be the same. And I think that's the mark I'm putting on The Family Band. Another drummer could come play one of the songs, but they couldn't do a Robert Randolph & The Family Band show like I can.

MD: Now that the new record is out, what's next for The Family Band?

Marcus: *Colorblind* is for *all* people—that's why it's called *Colorblind*. I think it's going to be a huge success. Quote me on it! We've got a lot of good reviews, and people like the album. My son sings along with it every day.

I want to stick with The Family Band forever, but I like making these tracks with Garage Band, so I definitely want to produce tracks with people. And if somebody wants me to play in the studio, I'll play. But as far as the road, I'm with Robert Randolph & The Family Band. Not that somebody might want to ask me, but I don't think I would play with anybody else unless we were just *done*. Or unless we were rich enough to have a year off. [laughs]

And I want to keep getting better on the drums. I want to be known as the guy in the pocket just holding it down. I'm not trying to be mister trick man. I mean, I'm cool with learning tricks and progressing at learning where to put different things.

I want to be low-key, but I want to be a rock star. I'm not gonna lie. Why not? I want to walk the red carpet. I want to get me a Bentley one day, with a big house in the hills. Until then, I'm cool with this life I'm living right now. I've got a regular house, a regular car, my wife, Trisha, my son, Marcus Jr.—I'm *good*.

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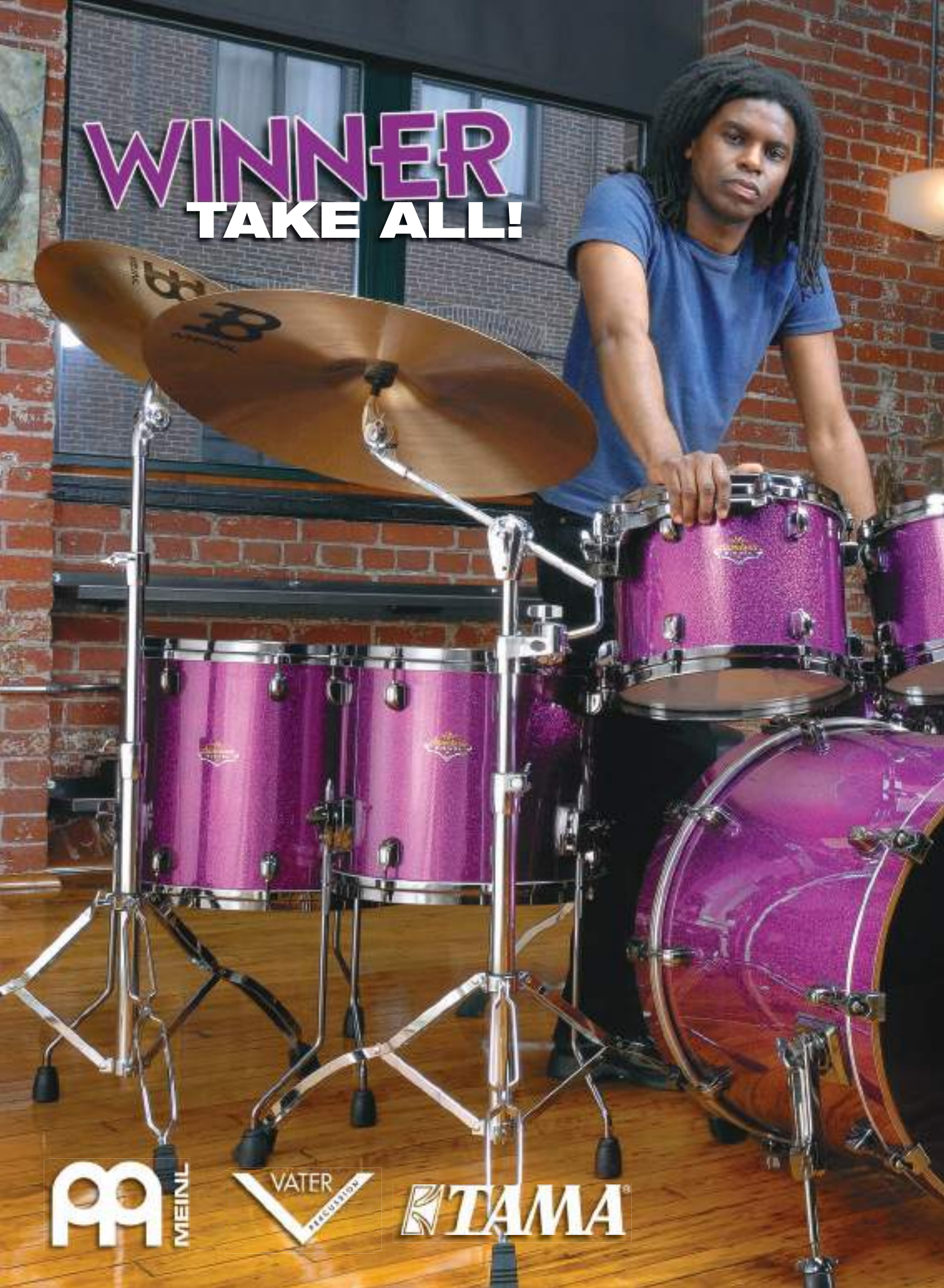
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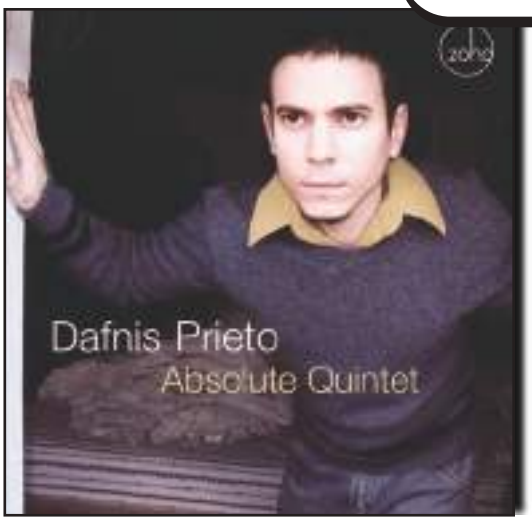

Inspired by early Cuban dance music incorporating the strings of European chamber music, drummer **DAFNIS PRIETO** integrates violin and cello with sax, Hammond/keyboards, and drums. The results are exhilaratingly modern. Prieto's second outing as leader/composer bolsters his candidacy as a forerunner in new Latin jazz directions. Expect rich, melodic ensemble sound, hip progressive grooves, and inventive improvisation. And Prieto's astounding drumming is the undisputed catalyst. Delivering breathtakingly complex layers like multiple percussionists, Prieto is both grooving and "orchestral." Having rapidly garnered prestige as a sideman since his 1999 arrival in New York from Cuba, Prieto's now staked his own very fertile ground. (Zoho) **Jeff Potter**

JOHN MAYER CONTINUUM

★★★☆☆

If you're not biased against Mayer's cuddly brand of mellow rock, you could view **STEVE JORDAN**'s work on *Continuum* as a pop-drumming master class. He gets right to the core of each blues and R&B–tinged song, whether that means swinging gently, grooving mightily, or quietly stirring up a ballad with brushes. Using an array of snare drums from crisp and sharp to deep and fat, co-producer Jordan draws from a wide palette of colors while painting in broad strokes. His presence alone raises Mayer's credibility, but the two make natural partners, and Mayer's Clapton-style guitar playing proves he's no adult-alternative flavor of the month. (Columbia) **Michael Parillo**

KENNY GARRETT BEYOND THE WALL

★★★★☆

Kenny Garrett has recorded several exciting albums, each offering something fresh while remaining distinct. His latest reunites him with **BRIAN BLADE**, for a powerful, moving set of music that takes its cue from the late-1960s jazz scene, along with a little Asian inspiration. And with guest players **Pharoah Sanders** (tenor sax) and **Bobby Hutcherson** (vibes), an exciting ensemble is created for these explorations. From quiet pulses under wordless vocals, to dynamic rumblings, to his phenomenally driving time, Blade's performance here is informed, inspired, and consistently creative. Ranging from free-form to funky, thoughtful to fiery, Blade makes an important contribution to Garrett's conception. (Nonesuch) **Martin Patmos**

MY LATEST OBSESSION Drummers On Drummers

THE SADIES' MIKE BELITSKY ON TONY JOE WHITE'S JERRY CARRIGAN

Vanessa Heins

We had a particular mix tape in the van for a while, and every time this one song came on I'd ask who it was. I eventually got the album it was from, Tony Joe White's *Black & White*, and I obsessively listened to it and never tired of its timeless sound. It merges rock, soul, country, and some dark swampy beats that feel right at home together. The drummer on all but one track is Jerry Carrigan; the other drummer is Jimmy Isbell. Both are inspired players. The first side is all original material, with numbers like "Polk Salad Annie" and "Soulfrancisco," while side two contains cover versions of songs like "Who's Makin' Love" and a great version of Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman," complete with strings and horns. Every musician on the album plays with so much soul, and TJW's voice is rich and captivating.

The Sadies' latest is *Tales Of The Ratfink*.

DAVID SULLIVAN-KAPLAN OF MEN WOMEN & CHILDREN ON ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS' PETE THOMAS

Pete Thomas is probably my all-time favorite drummer. He uses the drumset for melody better than anyone! His groove and feel on *Get Happy!* are undeniable, and the Attractions seamlessly blend soul, mod, and rock like only they could. This record has been a staple in my collection since day one.

Men Women & Children's self-titled album was recently released. For lots more of David Sullivan-Kaplan's musical obsessions, go to the Blog page at moderndrummer.com.

JEREMY ENIGK'S KAANAN TUPPER ON JON THEODORE AND T.V. ON THE RADIO'S JALEEL THOMSON

Mark Swanson

My current drumming obsession is two-fold. First, Jon Theodore, ex of The Mars Volta. My mind is blown by this guy. His right foot is faster than a speeding bullet and as graceful as a butterfly. Second is Jaleel Thomson from T.V. On The Radio. I've had the pleasure of seeing him play live, and it's amazing. He is *so* on it, man! He was doing things that I still am not sure can be done. Kung-fu kinds of things. Very subtle, and my favorite "behind the beat" drummer out there.

Kaanan Tupper can be heard on Fire Theft singer Jeremy Enigk's latest solo album, *World Waits*.

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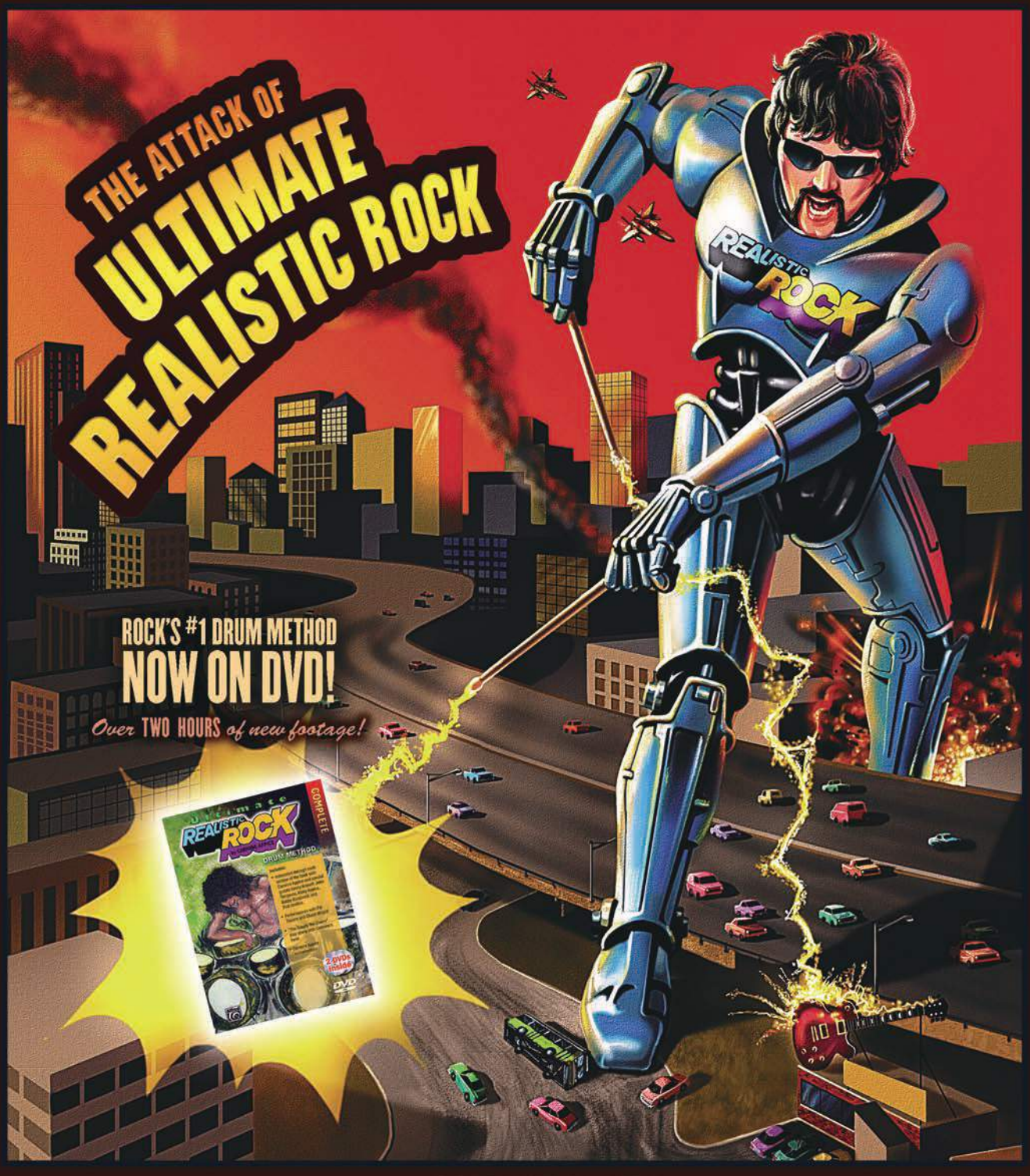

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TRIVIUM THE CRUSADE

★★★½☆

Trivium have done right with the early–Metallica/Megadeth school of thrash on their latest album: **Matt Heafy** is ferocious as a singer and a guitarist, and he's bolstered mightily by the skillful drumming of **TRAVIS SMITH**. On "Ignition," Smith maintains a bestial, colorfully nuanced beat splashed with tasteful cymbals; and he steps into overdrive with a full-throttle kick and wicked fills on "Detonation." *The Crusade* will delight fans of both extreme metal and tuneful rock. (Roadrunner) **Jeff Perlah**

HIPBONES 4

★★★½☆

Grooving, sax-fronted jazz group Hipbones are consistently interesting yet not overly slick. Drummer **ROBIN TOLLESON**'s engaging delivery makes you raise an eyebrow with his over-the-bar phrasing on album-opener "Scram" and the perfectly placed duple rolls in the half-time shuffle of The Police's "Walking On The Moon." He knows how to set up others too, catching a tambourine here or a splash there, always lending the right support for **Gary Schwantes**' cool sax solos. The excellent recording seals the deal on a satisfying listen. (www.hipbones.net) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

VARIOUS ARTISTS WHAT IT IS! FUNKY SOUL AND RARE GROOVES (1967-1977)

★★★★☆

As detailed as the liner notes are to this four-disc set of deep funk and soul, you'll still spend hours Googling the names of the unsung drummers represented here. And in addition to the mystery timekeepers supplying proto breakbeats, there are plenty of recognizable names doing their best work. **ZIGGY MODELISTE** laying it down with simplicity on Willie West's "Fairchild" and Joni Mitchell/L.A. Express drummer **JOHN GUERIN** sweating out a manic beat in Tulane's jazz-funk workout "Hammer" are but a couple highlights that barely scratch the surface of this treasure chest of sample-ready grooves. (Rhino) **Patrick Berkery**

THE DECEMBERISTS THE CRANE WIFE

★★★★½

While *The Crane Wife* features pop fare like "O Valencia!" that stops you cold, arriving there requires serious navigation skills—through murder ballads, Irish jigs, four-part suites, and blue-eyed disco rock. It's a topsy-turvy trip, but drummer **JOHN MOEN** (late of Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks) makes it smooth as possible, whether pacing "The Perfect Crime # 2" with a steady four-on-the-floor, or bouncing from dramatic fills to halting pauses during "The Island/Come And See/The Landlord's Daughter/You'll Not Feel The Drowning" mini opera. Think of it as prog without the tuneless fog. (Capitol) **Patrick Berkery**

SIGNIFICANT REISSUES BY KEN MICALLEF

INCREDIBLE BONGO BAND

Comprised of studio players including the mighty **JIM GORDON**, The Incredible Bongo Band created one of hip-hop's seminal beats in "Apache," one of the most sampled songs ever. And one listen to Gordon's titanic grooves on *Bongo Rock*, which are often augmented by conguero **King Errisson**, proves why this album (nineteen tracks) was in high demand by '80s beat purveyors. Amid its early-'70s funky grooves, Gordon trades long fours in "Dueling Bongos," lays down an incredible pulse in "Tom Dooley," and takes a thumping solo in "Sharp Nine." *Bongo Rock* confirms Gordon's eerie greatness. (Mr.Bongo)

SEETHER ONE COLD NIGHT

★★★★½

Seether vocalist **Shaun Morgan** was sick. He couldn't even stand and perform—but he could sit and sing, thus the impetus for the live acoustic performance of *One Cold Night*. Acoustic collections often sound contrived, but not here. High in the mix, **JOHN HUMPHREY**'s drums sound perfectly at home meshing with all acoustic instruments. And Humphrey grooves nicely on the funked-out intro to "Truth" and on the Pearl Jam cover "Immortality." *One Cold Night* is a pleasant surprise: Seether takes a chance, and delivers. (Wind-Up) **Steven Losey**

TAKING THE REINS

BILLY COBHAM FLIGHT TIME

This live Billy Cobham disc, culled from a 1980 European tour, features the fusion master's short-lived unit of guitarist **Barry Finnerty**, keyboardist **Don Grolnick**, and bassist **Tim Landers**. Previously available only as an import, this Stateside release is worth the wait. On the title track, Cobham opens with a quick spin around the toms and cymbals before Finnerty starts filling in the margins and playing off the drummer. And when the histrionics cool to a mellow glow on "Princess," the interplay of the entire group is a thing of restrained beauty. (MVD Audio) **Patrick Berkery**

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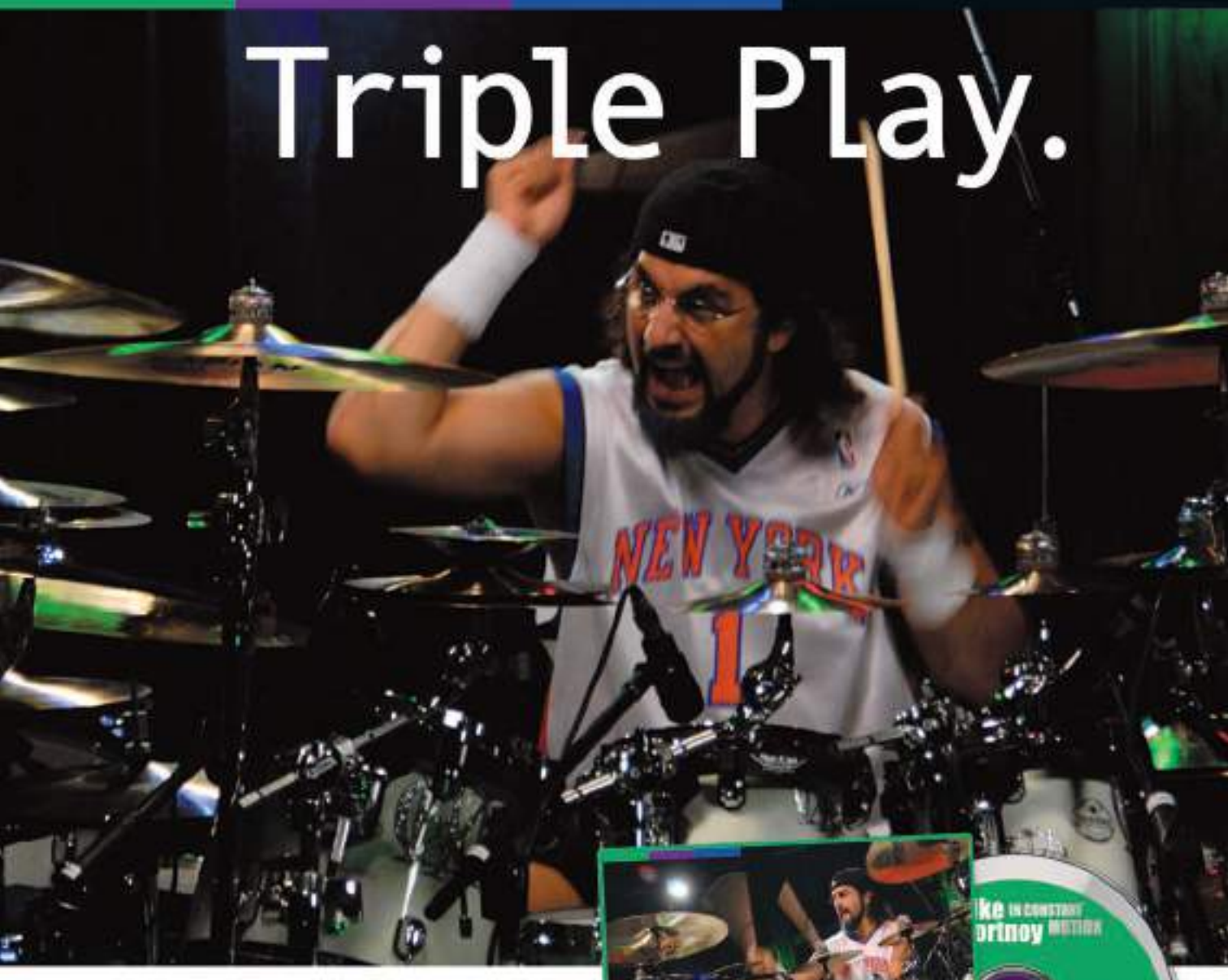

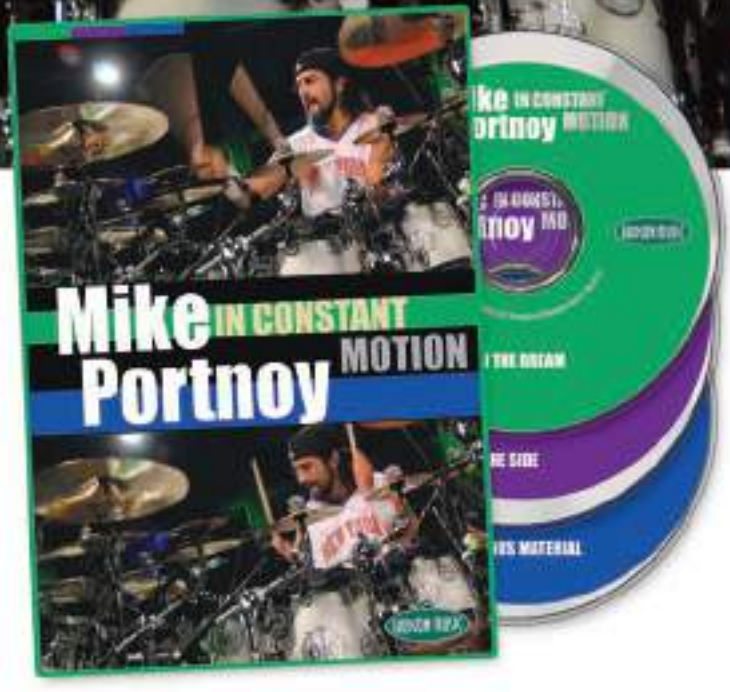

In Constant Motion features over seven hours of instruction as well as live and studio performances of virtually all the music Mike's been involved with since his award-winning "Liquid Drum Theater" video. Packed with state-of-the-art audio and video, special features and printable transcriptions of selected performances, the depth and diversity of this package is unprecedented and recommended for drummers of all interest and ability levels.

Disc 1: In the Dream focuses on music from the last three Dream Theater albums, featuring six band performances, new studio drumtracks and in-depth analysis.

Disc 2: On the Side covers Mike's side projects, including his work with TransAtlantic, OSI and all four of his tribute bands.

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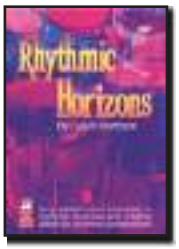
RHYTHMIC HORIZONS BY GAVIN HARRISON

DVD (TWO-SIDED) LEVEL: ADVANCED $34.70

★★★★½

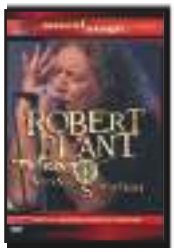


You've got to pay close attention to grasp the multi-layered polyrhythmic concepts Porcupine Tree drummer Gavin Harrison demonstrates here. But that's the beauty of DVD: You can easily rewind. And Harrison includes printable PDF files of all the lessons. In his Overriding lessons, the drummer explains and performs his uniquely layered groove patterns over melodic musical lines, which help to demonstrate his complex grooves within a musical context. The Polyrhythmic Theory and Resolving lessons can really tweak your brain, in a good way, for years of useful polyrhythmic practice. There's also excellent, hands-on odd-meter info throughout this well-presented package. And Harrison includes song and solo performances, play-along mp3s, alternative audio mixes, and foreign subtitles. (www.drumset.demon.co.uk) **Mike Haid**

ROBERT PLANT AND THE STRANGE SENSATION SOUNDSTAGE

DVD LEVEL: ALL $19.98

★★★★★



When it comes to drummers, Robert Plant always keeps good company: Richie Hayward, Michael Lee—and that Bonham fella sure knew his way around the tubs. Plant's latest timekeeper, **CLIVE DEAMER**, ranks right up there. His approximation of Bonzo's feral stomp, coupled with a fluid style, puts a modern spin on the Plant/Zeppelin sound. This performance from the PBS *Soundstage* series finds Plant and band in top form. Whether reshaping a warhorse like "No Quarter" into a hand percussion symphony or spinning some new bit of bluesy psychedelia such as "The Enchanter," Deamer's in the middle of everything, laying down Bonham-like grooves that swing no matter how crazy the time signature (see "Freedom Fries"), on a decidedly Bonham-esque Ludwig kit. It's hauntingly familiar—and fantastic. (Rounder/ZOE Vision) **Patrick Berkery**

TITO PUENTE: KING OF LATIN MUSIC BY JIM PAYNE

BOOK/DVD LEVEL: ALL $22.95

★★★★½

It could be said that Tito Puente taught the world to dance to Latin music. The drummer-turned-percussionist gave the music its greatest boost throughout the world with his infectious, percussive rhythms, uplifting spirit, and magnetic personality. *King Of Latin Music* is an excellent read on the history of The Mambo King and his contributions to Latin jazz. The gem in this package is the forty-five-minute DVD interview with Tito. And the book details the history of Afro-Cuban music and Latin jazz, *and* offers a complete discography of Tito's 118 recordings. An excellent presentation. (Hudson Music) **Mike Haid**

PROGRESSIVE RHYTHMS BY CHRIS BRIEN

DVD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $45

★★★½☆

The self-proclaimed "Drumming Wizard Of Oz," Australian master Brien covers the basics of fundamental drumset studies here, including hand/foot technique, groove playing, independence, and improvisation. Brien offers a visual bonus by allowing viewers to access on-line video files of his performances and explanations of several exercises from the book. Along the way, he emphasizes the importance of rudiments and rhythmic knowledge, providing several pages of rhythmic studies and the essential forty-eight rudiments. Eighth-and 16th-note rock beats, accented 16ths, triplets, Latin rhythms, and ostinatos round out this well-structured, easy-to-follow 157-page book. It's high-priced (shipping from Australia is included), but it'll get you started on the right track for solid drumset basics and beyond. (www.chrisbrien.com) **Mike Haid**

THE CODE OF FUNK BY DAVID GARIBALDI

BOOK/CD/DVD/DVD-ROM LEVEL: ADVANCED $29.95

★★★★½

This multi-media presentation features legendary funk master David Garibaldi and includes fully transcribed and analyzed charts of eight recent Tower Of Power tracks from the super-funky *Oakland Zone* CD. Also included is a music-minus-drums play-along CD of these same eight studio tracks. The coolest features revolve around the two DVDs that offer interactive audio files of the same songs. One disc contains audio files formatted for Acid (PC) and Garageband (Mac) audio programs that allow you to remix, loop, and change the song tempos without changing the pitch of the songs. A helpful video tutorial is also included. The second DVD-ROM includes Audio Stems that must be used with more advanced multi-track studio software such as Pro Tools, Nuendo, and Cakewalk. These files allow individual isolation of Garibaldi's kit to pinpoint each limb of his legendary style and feel. This is an advanced and very useful educational package, and one like no other that I have experienced. Congrats to Hudson for another innovative and affordable educational tool for drummers. (Hudson Music) **Mike Haid**

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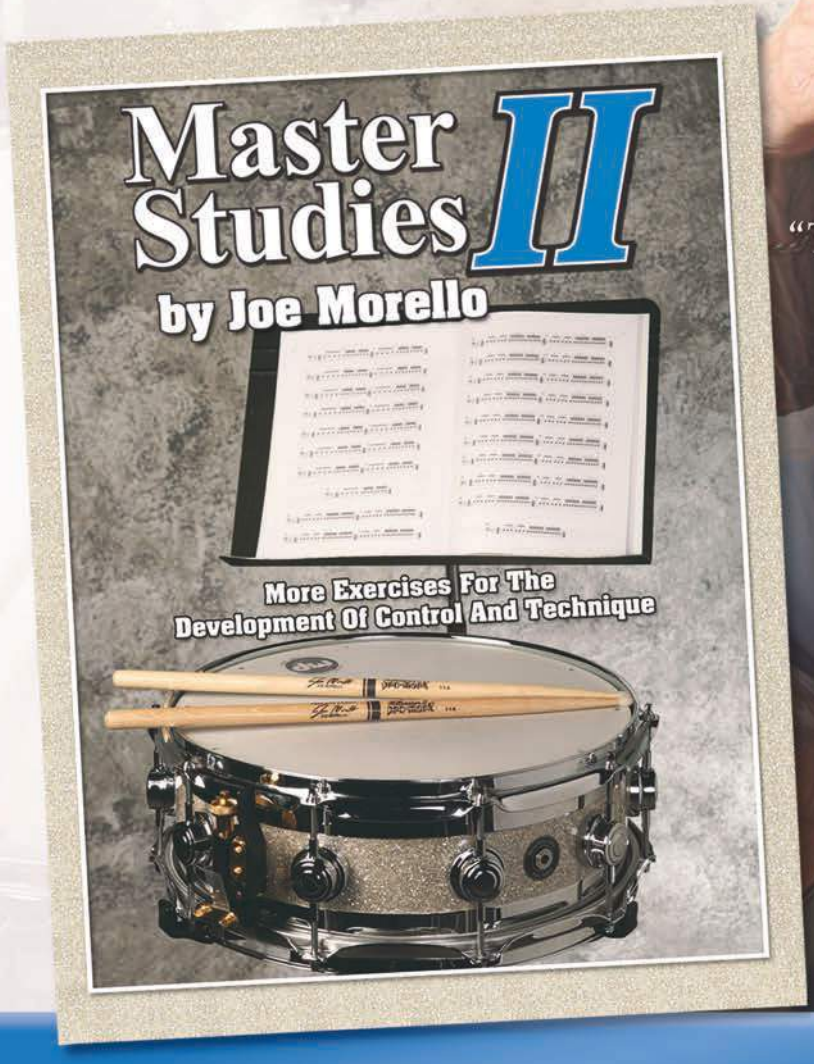

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R.E.M. WHEN THE LIGHT IS MINE: THE BEST OF THE I.R.S. YEARS 1982-1987

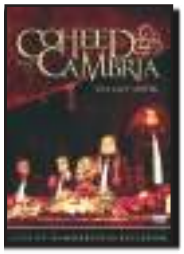
DVD LEVEL: ALL $24.98

★★★½☆

When The Light Is Mine is an engaging video chronicle of R.E.M.'s ascent from scrappy garage pop band ("Wolves, Lower"), to psychedelic sound weavers ("Feeling Gravitys Pull"), to arena-ready superstars ("The One I Love"). Most of the band's I.R.S. Records videos are included here. But the real treats are the live television appearances and rehearsal-room interviews, which show the substantial role original drummer/co-founder **BILL BERRY** played in R.E.M.'s aural and visual appeal. (Berry left the band in 1997.) Bill's unique hi-hat–driven style is in full effect during two UK TV performances: a pumped-up run-through of "Radio Free Europe" and a solidly grooving "Talk About The Passion." The original four members of R.E.M. recently reconvened for a short performance celebrating their induction into the Georgia Music Hall Of Fame. Watching this collection makes one hope it wasn't just a one-off. (Capitol) **Jon Wurster**

COHEED & CAMBRIA THE LAST SUPPER: LIVE AT HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM

★★★☆☆



Fans of Coheed & Cambria's hippie metal proclaim that their shows are "a life changing experience." At least that's the opinion of two devotees who attended this concert last May. Throughout C&C's stock metal rhythms, Rush filigree, and Zeppelinish slam, drummer **JOSH EPPARD** plays with a flowing looseness and a sledgehammer energy that makes the band cook. Playing left-hand lead on a right-handed kit, Eppard displays extremely flexible wrists when smashing his snare or flailing tasteful pang crashes in the hits "Blood Red Summer" and "A Favor House Atlantic." (Columbia/Equal Vision) **Ken Micallef**

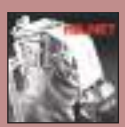
MAXIMUM MINNEMANN BY MARCO MINNEMANN AND RICK GRATTON

BOOK/CD LEVEL: ADVANCED $24.95

★★★☆☆

Entertaining and extremely talented drumming sensation Marco Minnemann reveals his uncommon, over-the-top, daily drumset practice routines in this mind-bending collection of rudimental exercises, twisted groove warm-ups, and challenging time-stretching exercises. Lots of odd-meter concepts and accented odd-time note groupings in 4/4 produce endless variations. Marco's bass drum pyramids, "pyradiddles," and rhythmic overlaps are advanced concepts that require maximum focus and slow practice to achieve even minimal results. The ninety-four-page book is well written, but the CD audio examples are a bit difficult to follow at times due, in part, to the lack of time reference over certain complex rhythms. Overall, though, this is an affordable and highly advanced independence and chops builder, guaranteed to tweak your melon. (World Music 4all) **Mike Haid**

AND FURTHERMORE...



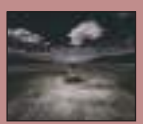
HELMET MONOCHROME

New to the Helmet drum throne is **MIKE JOST**, whose performance here deftly complements guitarist **Page Hamilton**'s signature rhythm-fueled riffs. Jost also knows when to stay out of the way, letting songs like "Bury Me" develop organically, rather than forcing them forward. (Warcon) **Waleed Rashidi**

MANUEL VALERA GROUP MELANCOLIA

Pat Metheny drummer **ANTONIO SANCHEZ**'s exquisite performance at the 2003 MD Festival turned many in the audience into true believers. And Sanchez's beautifully nuanced touch is all over this piano-led recording. On "Hidden" he does a scorching Afro-Cuban cymbal dance, all the while avoiding the downbeat. What's clearly *not* hidden is his impressive talent. (www.manuelvalera.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

UNDEROATH DEFINE THE GREAT LINE



Snares and crashes get well abused on screamo band Underoath's latest effort—and for good reason. With a majority of the tracks requiring a heavy-handed approach, drummer **AARON GILLESPIE** wages war without appearing overbearing or cumbersome. Exceptional drumming tracks include "Writing On The Walls" and "Returning Empty Handed." (Tooth & Nail) **Waleed Rashidi**

THE PAUL CHESNE BAND WET DOG MAN

MITCH MARINE contributes strong and tasty funk-rock drums to *Wet Dog Man*, The Paul Chesne Band's darkly romantic, new release. Marine is also the date's producer, bathing Chesne's acoustic guitar, vocals, and raps in a hard-rocking, rootsy light. (www.paulchesne.com) **Mike Haid**

BOUNCING SOULS THE GOLD RECORD

Bouncing Souls drummer **MICHAEL McDERMOTT** returns with a dependable punk foundation. His street smarts and no-nonsense stickwork propel sing-along anthems, double-timed hustles, and intimate tracks with a consistent quality. (Epitaph) **Waleed Rashidi**

To hear the artists reviewed in this month's *Critique*, go to MD Radio at www.moderndrummer.com.

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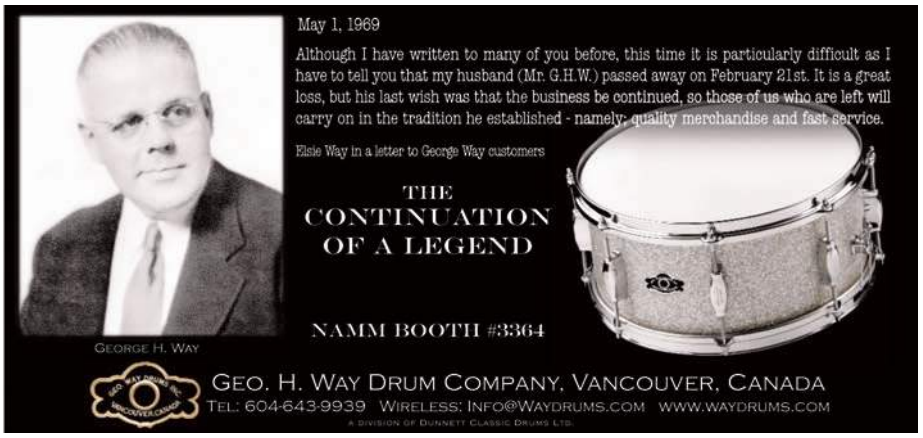
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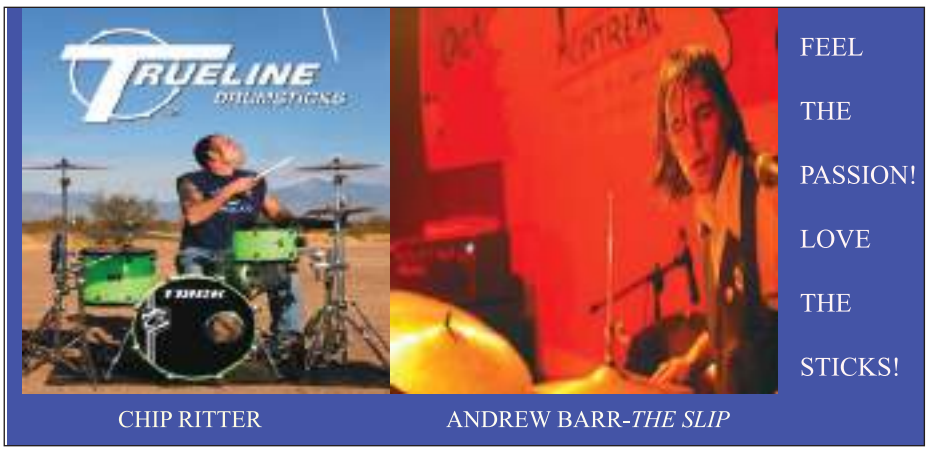
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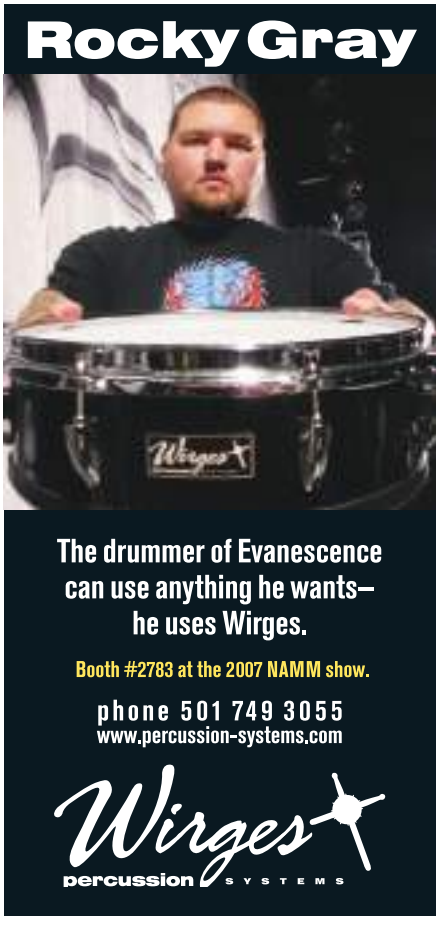
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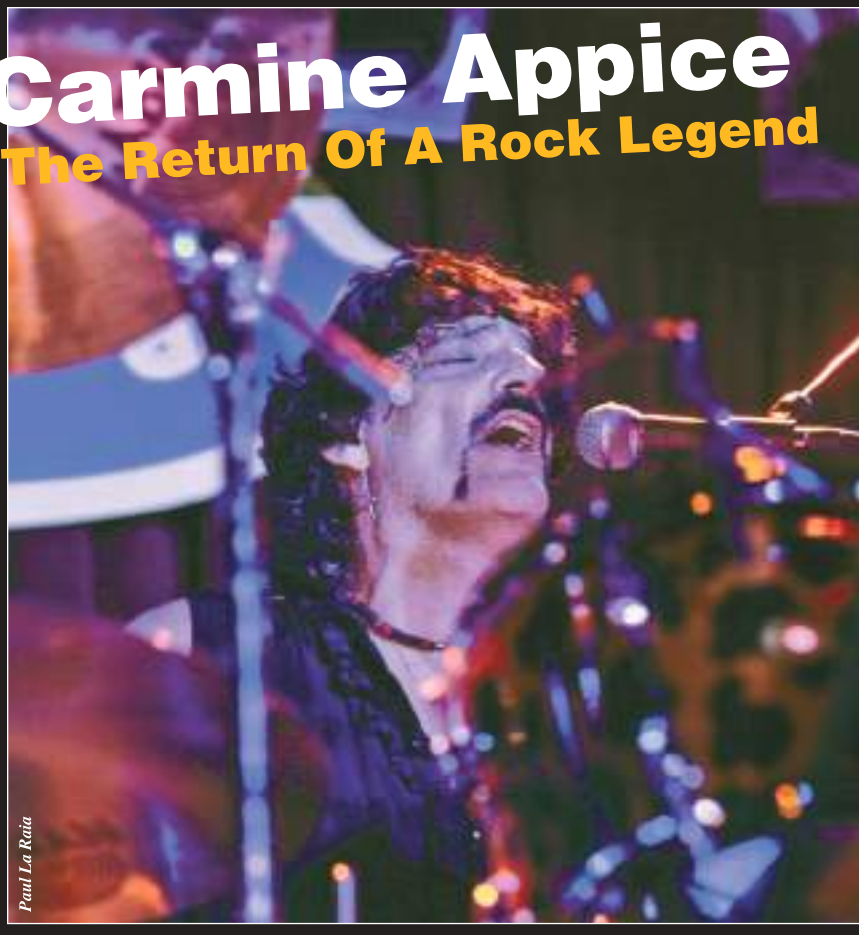

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PASIC '06

Livin' Large In Austin

Billy Cobham

William Hawkins

It looks like everything *is* bigger in Texas. PASIC 2006, held this past November 8–11 in Austin, Texas, drew 7,376 attendees, the second-highest number in the event's history. (Which was number-one, you ask? *Dallas*, in 2000. Apparently percussionists dig the Lone Star State.)

Drummers and percussionists who came to PASIC 2006 for inspiration and education certainly got it. Averaging three clinics/concerts per hour, the four-day event was packed with name and emerging talent from every area of percussion. **Airto Moreira** (legend), **Keiko Abe** (mallet giant), **Glen Velez** (world), **Jim Kilpatrick** (marching), **Doug Howard** (classical), and **David Friedman/Dave Samuels** (jazz mallets) were just a few of the percussion greats who performed at the event.

A solid drumset lineup was also presented. Up-and-comer **Gil Sharone** (Stolen Babies) kicked off Thursday with his heavy approach and well-developed chops, and ran through several educational ideas. Speaking of education, **Pat Petrillo** (Gloria Gaynor/The Collective instructor) is a fine clinician who proved able to educate and entertain as he explained the concepts from his latest work, *Hands, Grooves, & Fills*.

Next up was Styx's great **Todd Sucherman**, who displayed a fine touch on the instrument—as well as world-class technique—while performing to fusion and rock tracks. **Marty Morell**, of Bill Evans fame, offered a nice, laid-back clinic on jazz drumming. Marty's brush technique had drummers jumping to the side of the stage to witness his mastery. Rounding out the day were solid clinics by **Thomas Lang** (on a large set of Roland V-Drums) and **Teddy Campbell** (*American Idol*), who discussed the importance of "pocket."

Kenwood Dennard

William Hawkins

Rodney Holmes

William Hawkins

On Friday, **Chris Layton** (known for his work with Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble) gave one of the best clinics of the event. Performing with a quartel, Layton ably demonstrated several classic two-handed (playing in unison) R&B and shuffle grooves. Jazz great **Ralph Peterson** also gave a fun clinic, showcasing his aggressive yet loose approach—with some trumpet playing thrown in for good measure.

The final clinic of Friday was presented by **Billy Cobham**, who performed two lengthy and impressive solos on his massive kit. At times playing with four sticks, shaker mallets, brushes, and even bare hands, Billy held the Texas-size crowd (the largest of the event) in the palm of his hand.

Besides all of the clinics, concerts, and competitions, another big draw at PASIC 2006 was the exhibit hall, where over a hundred companies from across the industry displayed their latest wares. **Hammerhead**, a new company headed by Om Percussion founder John Stannard, was the buzz of the show. Their bronze alloy hybrid line, a combination of sculptures and playable instruments, looked great and sounded amazing. (FYI, the company's name may be changing. Stay tuned for more info.)

On the final day of the convention, Rascal Flatts drummer **Jim Riley** played an opening solo that covered many styles, and then offered a clear explanation of the Nashville number system. Living Colour's **Will Calhoun** gave one of the most musically impressive performances of PASIC '06, playing extremely hip solos that combined sensitivity, subtlety, dynamics, and creativity with his fine technique. Next up was **Benny Greb**—and his crazy feet. The buzz-worthy German drummer played several interesting-sounding patterns with his feet moving between different sound sources. And jazz great **John Riley** gave one of the most educational master classes of the convention. His standing room–only clinic covered the concept of motivic soloing.

Other noteworthy drumset clinicians at PASIC '06 included **Mike Clark** and **Jim Payne** performing together, **Kenwood Dennard** demonstrating his "Woodstroke," **Rodney Holmes** displaying his finely honed chops in a solo setting, **Bob Gatzen** on motivation, and **Donny Gruendler** on working with sequenced tracks onstage.

PAS inducted three highly respected gentlemen into its Hall Of Fame at the 2006 convention. Billy Cobham was honored, along with marimba great **Leigh Howard Stevens** and Latin Percussion founder **Martin Cohen**.

PASIC 2007 will be held in Columbus, Ohio, October 31 through November 3. For more info, go to www.pasic.org. **Frederick Bay**

Yamaha Celebrates YASH Grand Opening

Present at the opening ceremonies were (from left) Dave Weckl, Rick Marotta, Zildjian's John DeChristopher, and Akira Jimbo.

Yamaha celebrated the opening of their new Artist Services Hollywood facility in North Hollywood, California this past October 21 with a party attended by industry colleagues and artists alike. The event featured a *Kagami Biraki* saki ceremony conducted by Yamaha Corporation of America president Yoshihiro Doi, which symbolizes a new beginning and includes the hammering open of a wooden sake barrel. Drummers in attendance included Donald Barrett, Marcus Baylor, Moke, Bogie Bowles, Tom Brechtlein, Ray Brinker, Ndugu Chancler, Matt Flynn, Nikki Glaspie, Ralph Humphrey, Akira Jimbo, James Kottak, Russ Kunkel, Pete Magadini, Rick Marotta, Jerry Marotta, Russ Miller, Aaron Montgomery, Felix Pollard, Jay Skowronek, Joel Stevenett, and Dave Weckl.

The new facility will provide artist support under the direction of AR manager Joe Testa and AR coordinator Jordan Barth. The complex is also home to a research and development center for guitars and drums, drum and guitar showrooms, a photo studio, a recording studio, a live performance room, a repair workshop, and warehouse space.

The lobby of Yamaha's new Artist Services Hollywood facility features a display of vintage and contemporary drums.

Montreal Drum Fest 2006

Stalwarts And Surprises

Roy Haynes

The fourteenth annual Montreal Drum Fest, held this past November 11 and 12 in downtown Montreal, Quebec, Canada, stuck to the formula that's made it one of the longest-running, most successful drum festivals in the world: Invite the favorites and mix in a few surprises.

The festival began on Saturday with the Yamaha "Rising Star Showcase," highlighting talented young players from the Quebec area. **Luc Catellier**, **Dominic Cloutier**, **Louis-Etienne Drouin**, and **Isaac Dumont** performed amazingly, despite their tender ages. Next up was **Yvette "Baby Girl" Preyer**, who will be remembered as much for her substantial spoken portion as for her nail-it grooves.

Festival veteran **Dom Famularo** met with an ovation before he even got a word out. His tag-team buddy, **Liberty DeVitto**, was new to the Montreal crowd, but his drumming—shaped by years of playing with Billy Joel—went over well. Then Cuban/American percussionist **Melena** and drummer **Raul Pineda** gave a performance spiked with moments of excitement owing to Melena's facility on diverse instruments and Raul's command of the kit.

Next, Styx drummer **Todd Sucherman**'s exceptional flare and razor-sharp execution dazzled the crowd. Then **Clayton Cameron** performed—at first solo, demonstrating his brush prowess, and later with a crack Montreal rhythm section. The veteran jazzer worked out on a startling mod orange drumset.

Like Sucherman, Saturday closer **Gavin Harrison** was a festival newcomer, although the emcee's mention of his band, Porcupine Tree, drew cheers from the audience. Gavin demonstrated tremendous chops *and* remarkable feel—a difficult combination to pull off.

Sunday's crowd was greeted by **Derico Watson**, who tossed off joyous, riveting grooves and muscular fills. Canadian drum star **Mark Kelso** then performed, with Latin great Hilario Duran on piano and Roberto Occhipinti on upright bass. Displaying outstanding taste and control, Mark owned every inch of his kit.

Next, the irrepressible **Joey Heredia** appeared with Marco Mendoza on bass and Renato Neto on keys. Joey has honed his Latin-tinged rock grooves for even greater effect, and has sharpened his fills to an even finer edge. The trio had everyone talking afterwards.

Bill Bruford

Bill Stewart

Clayton Cameron

Earthworks' **Bill Bruford** was new to the fest, but clearly not to the crowd. His presentation, both spoken and playing to tracks, was tailor-made for the assembled throng, who hung on the fusion/prog-rock icon's every word and move. Jazz man **Bill Stewart** followed in a rare solo set, executing several fugue-like improvisations, stating themes and developing them patiently to feverish heights. Stewart's power and sense of drama swayed even the most ardent rockers.

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Joey Heredia

Gavin Harrison

Yvette "Baby Girl" Preyer

Todd Sucherman

And then came **Roy Haynes.** The drumming legend, now in his eighties, worked his young band until the sweat flowed like a river. Roy darted between snare and flat cymbal, and punctuated on toms and kick, proving himself as stylish and contemporary as ever.

Sponsors for the event included Aquarian, Audix, Drum Workshop, Evans, Gon Bops, Gretsch, Headhunters, Latin Percussion, Ludwig, Mapex, Paiste, Pearl, Premier, Pro-Mark, Regal Tip, Remo, Rhythm Tech, S-Hoop, Sabian, Sonor, Tama, Taye, Vater, Vic Firth, Yamaha, and Zildjian cymbals & sticks. **Story and photos by T. Bruce Wittet**

Who's Playing What

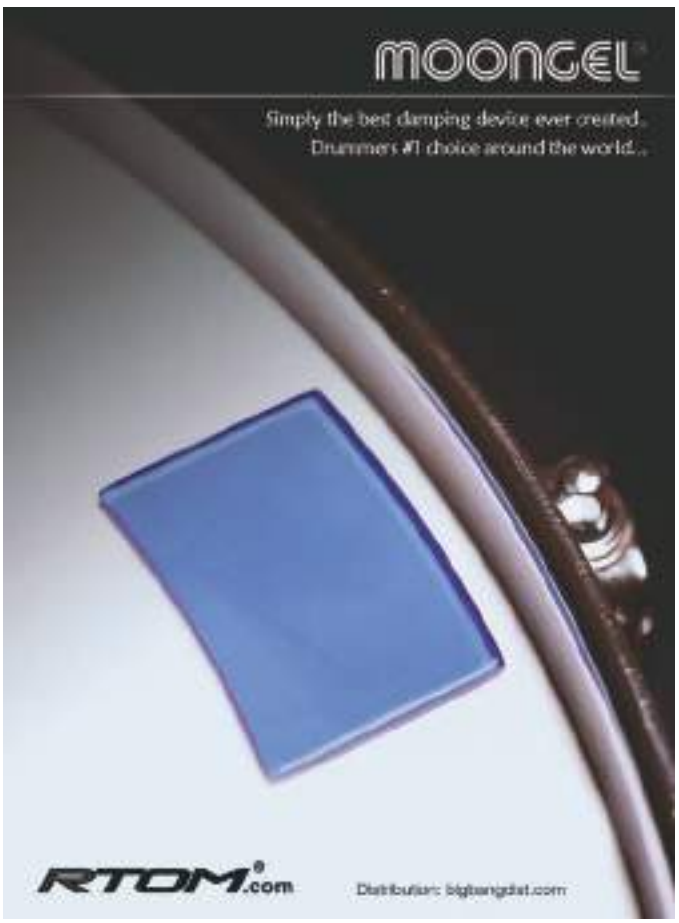
Speed-metal icon **Derek Roddy** is now a Vater artist, as are **Cody Hanson** (Hinder), **Mark Stepro** (Ben Kweller), **Darius Manee** (Lyrics Born), **Steve Flynn** (Gnostic/Atheist), **Graham Broad** (Roger Waters), and **Evan Johns** (Hurt).

Jazz drum star **Jeff Ballard** is a new Yamaha artist.

Top German tour and session drummer **Ralf Gustke** (Xavier Naidoo, Shne Mannheims, Sabrina Setlur) is now playing Meinl cymbals.

Ace British drummer **Gary Husband** (Level 42) is once again playing Pearl drums.

Paiste's international family of artist endorsers now includes **Julian Blais** (The Stills, Canada), **Jorge Bezzera Jr.** (Joe Zawinul, France), **Oscar Musiate** (Juan Gabriel, Mexico), **Craig Blundell** (Freelance, Great Britain), **Donald Barrett** (Jesse McCartney, USA), **Larry Eagle** (Bruce Springsteen Seeger Sessions Band, USA), **Hayley Cramer** (McQueen, Great Britain), and **Larone McMillian** (Jo-Jo, USA).



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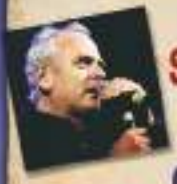

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The title above is how Nashville drummer Jimmy Anderson describes himself. That description led him to create what he believes is the ultimate portable drumset. It started out as a full-size Zickos acrylic kit, which Jimmy cut down into more compact sizes. He added 45° bearing edges to all the shells, cut some "funky shapes" into the Zildjian and Sabian cymbals, and completed the kit with a Donoho custom snare drum.

As Jimmy puts it: "I don't consider myself a drum maker. I'm just a working stiff. And my roadie hasn't shown up in fifteen years!"

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides or high-resolution (300 dpi) digital photos are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit.

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